

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5052

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As of January 18, 2021

**Title:** An act relating to the creation of health equity zones.

**Brief Description:** Concerning the creation of health equity zones.

**Sponsors:** Senators Keiser, Randall, Cleveland, Conway, Das, Frockt, Hasegawa, Kuderer, Lovelett, Nguyen, Nobles, Robinson, Saldaña, Salomon and Wilson, C..

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long Term Care: 1/18/21.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires the Department of Health to designate health equity zones based on health disparity data and work with community groups to develop projects to address inequalities.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG TERM CARE

**Staff:** Ricci Crinzi (786-7253)

**Background:** Health disparities refers to a high burden of illness, injury, disability, or mortality experienced by one group relative to another and are closely related to social, economic, and environmental factors. In Washington State, the Department of Health (DOH) recognizes that many communities experience health inequalities because of their race, culture, identity, or where they live. DOH provides a number of tools to track health disparities across the state through its Washington Tracking Network, including the Washington Environmental Health Disparities Map, data dashboards, and query portal. The dashboards and portal allow a person to explore public health and environmental data by type of measure, geography, and timeframe. The health disparities map is an interactive map that ranks the cumulative risk each community faces from environmental factors that influence health outcomes. State and local agencies can use these tools to compare different

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communities statewide and identify specific community needs.

**Summary of Bill:** Health equity zones are specifically identified geographic areas that have the goal of achieving health equity by eliminating health disparities. DOH, in coordination with the governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities, local health jurisdictions, and accountable communities of health, must review relevant health and population data to identify potential health equity zones in the state. Relevant health data may be related to chronic and infectious diseases, maternal birth complications, preterm births, and other newborn health complications.

DOH may limit the number of health equity zones identified initially, but must develop a plan to expand the health equity zone program statewide. After a zone has been identified, DOH must notify relevant community organizations in the health equity zone to identify projects to address the zone's most urgent needs related to health disparities.

Organizations within the zone may form a coalition to identify the needs of the zone, design projects to address those needs, and develop an action plan to implement the projects. DOH will support these coalitions in identifying and applying for project resources, as well as helping with project management, project development, and measurement of success.

By December 1, 2022, DOH must submit a report to the Legislature detailing the projects implemented in each zone and the outcome measures, including year-over-year health data, to demonstrate project success.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 12, 2021.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Building partnerships within the community is important for this bill to succeed. Communities need to have a voice and should not be rushed through the process of creating health equity zones. If the goal is to address systematic health issues, time needs to be invested into the communities. This project will take time to develop and grow. Health equity zones are a community based approach with local leadership and has the ability to actually make a change in communities.

OTHER: The idea of health equity zones is a good idea, it just is not in the budget this year. Improvements could include having a planning year once the pandemic is over to map out how the health equity zones will work. Could benefit from learning about funding and braided funding.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Karen Keiser, Prime Sponsor; AJ McClure, Global to Local.

OTHER: Kelly Cooper, Department of Health.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.