

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2125

As Reported by House Committee On: Education

Title: An act relating to providing rental housing for certificated and classified employees of public schools.

Brief Description: Providing rental housing for certain certificated and classified public school employees.

Sponsors: Representatives Miloscia, O'Brien, Sells, Skinner, Pedersen, Hankins, Goodman, Darneille, Rolfes, Ericks, Appleton, Santos and Ormsby.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/20/07, 2/23/07 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows school districts to renovate surplus school buildings to be used as rental housing for full-time teachers and classified school staff.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Barlow, Vice Chair; Haigh, McDermott, Santos and P. Sullivan.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member and Roach.

Staff: Andrew Colvin (786-7304).

Background:

Some school districts around the country have experienced difficulty attracting and retaining teachers due to a lack of affordable housing in the area of the district. In response, various programs have been set up to assist teachers with the cost of housing. Such programs have included housing subsidies, monthly stipends, and agreements with apartment companies for discounts in rent.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

School districts in Washington are authorized to rent, lease, or allow the occasional use of surplus real property owned by the district. Moneys derived from such use shall be deposited in the district's general fund to cover costs associated with the rental, lease, or use of the property, or in the district's capital projects and/or debt service fund.

Legislation enacted in 2004 allows Shaw Island School District to use money from its capital budget or general fund to construct teachers' cottages. Upon completion, teachers may rent the cottages from the district.

Summary of Bill:

School districts are authorized to renovate or convert district-owned surplus buildings into rental housing for teachers and staff of the district. Space permitting, such housing may also be made available to teachers and staff of other districts. School districts may contract with nonprofit or for-profit organizations for the renovation, maintenance, and management of the rental housing. Districts are encouraged to collaborate with community-based nonprofit organizations with experience in such areas.

School districts that offer rental housing under this act must develop a fair and objective selection process for approving tenants. The rental amount for each unit shall be set by the district's board of directors. Districts providing housing must report annually to the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development regarding use of the district's housing program.

Housing provided under this act shall not be considered a fringe benefit or included as salary when calculating actual average salaries of certified instructional staff.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: (In support) There is a lack of affordable housing generally, and especially for public employees. We have not done enough to address this issue. This bill specifically targets the problem for our school teachers and staff.

(Opposed) This bill brings out mixed feelings because the intent is good. This is an important issue, and it's part of the larger issue of a lack of affordable housing. The potential costs to districts is a concern, although part of the cost may be recouped in rent. The struggles of educators and staff to find affordable housing goes to the broader issues of school funding and pay that need to be addressed.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Miloscia, prime sponsor.

(Opposed) Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.