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SENATE BILL 6317

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State of Washington                      64th Legislature                      2016 Regular Session

By Senators Padden, Takko, Dammeier, Hargrove, and Hobbs

Read first time 01/14/16. Referred to Committee on Law & Justice.

1            AN ACT Relating to the establishment of an office of superior  
2 courts; and adding a new chapter to Title 2 RCW.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4            NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 1.**    (1) The legislature finds that superior  
5 courts are constitutionally established to serve Washington's  
6 citizens by resolving legal disputes in domestic, civil, juvenile,  
7 and criminal cases.

8            (2) The legislature further finds that the effective  
9 administration of Washington's superior courts is an important  
10 component of the state's responsibility to fairly resolve domestic,  
11 civil, juvenile, and criminal justice cases.

12            (3) The legislature further finds that research is imperative to  
13 guide trial court reform efforts that improve equal access for  
14 Washington citizens, and that as Washington's population continues to  
15 grow and become more diverse, equal access to justice is in jeopardy.

16            (4) The legislature further finds that the cost of litigation has  
17 increased significantly, and superior courts require staff assistance  
18 to provide statewide development of policies that maintain access to  
19 justice for all citizens.

20            (5) It is the intent of the legislature to establish an office of  
21 superior courts that will:

1 (a) Utilize contemporary research to advance trial court services  
2 through policy, programs, services, and participation with justice  
3 stakeholders;

4 (b) Pursue improvements to family and juvenile justice by  
5 maximizing investment in juvenile court cases and promoting policies  
6 that equalize access to proven methods of service across the state;

7 (c) Respond to legislative efforts to improve court operations  
8 through program and budget development; and

9 (d) Utilize and develop research tools that promote programs  
10 leading to best practices that improve public safety in the criminal  
11 justice system.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) An oversight committee of the office  
13 of superior courts is created, consisting of the following five  
14 members:

15 (a) The president of the association of the superior court judges  
16 of the state of Washington;

17 (b) The incoming president of the association of the superior  
18 court judges of the state of Washington;

19 (c) The immediate past president of the association of the  
20 superior court judges of the state of Washington;

21 (d) The chair of the legislative committee of the association of  
22 the superior court judges of the state of Washington; and

23 (e) One member of the board of the association of the superior  
24 court judges of the state of Washington, appointed by the executive  
25 committee of the association.

26 (2) The appointed member of the association board serves a one-  
27 year term, and may not serve more than three consecutive terms.

28 (3) Members of the oversight committee receive no compensation  
29 for their services as members of the oversight committee, but may be  
30 reimbursed for travel and other expenses in accordance with rules  
31 adopted by the office of financial management.

32 (4) The oversight committee oversees the activities of the office  
33 of superior courts created by this chapter.

34 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) A state office of superior courts is  
35 hereby created as an independent agency of the judicial branch.

36 (2) Activities of the office of superior courts are carried out  
37 by a director appointed by, and serving at the pleasure of, the  
38 oversight committee of the office of superior courts. The oversight

1 committee shall determine the qualifications and salary for the  
2 director.

3 (3) The director shall:

4 (a) Respond to legislative requests to provide data to improve  
5 court operations through policy, program, and budget development;

6 (b) Evaluate and promote programs that lead to best practices to  
7 improve public safety in the criminal justice system;

8 (c) Pursue improvements to family and juvenile justice by  
9 maximizing investment in juvenile court cases and promoting policies  
10 that equalize access to proven methods of services across the state;

11 (d) Work collaboratively with the administrative office of the  
12 courts and other key stakeholders on implementation of statewide  
13 technology advancements allowing for data collection and outcome  
14 measurement;

15 (e) Report quarterly to the oversight committee established by  
16 section 2 of this act;

17 (f) Submit a biennial budget request;

18 (g) Conduct studies and complete activities related to the  
19 efficient and effective operation of the superior courts, as directed  
20 by the oversight committee;

21 (h) Employ staff, with the consent of the oversight committee, to  
22 complete the activities of the office; and

23 (i) Enter into contracts as necessary to implement and complete  
24 the operation, activities, and services of the office, where  
25 consistent with this chapter.

26 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** The office of superior courts shall work  
27 collaboratively with the supreme court, administrative office of the  
28 courts, and statewide county association to advance the efficient and  
29 effective operation of the superior courts in all 39 counties of the  
30 state.

31 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** Sections 1 through 4 of this act  
32 constitute a new chapter in Title 2 RCW.

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