

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2818

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government, Elections & Information Technology

Title: An act relating to the appointment of religious coordinators.

Brief Description: Concerning the appointment of religious coordinators.

Sponsors: Representatives Frame, Irwin, Chapman, Senn, Sells, Sawyer, Appleton, Fitzgibbon, Macri and Stanford.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government, Elections & Information Technology: 1/30/18, 1/31/18 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Changes the employee title "chaplain" for institutions under the Department of Correction to "religious coordinator."
- Expands the housing allowance provided to chaplains to also include religious coordinators.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, ELECTIONS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Hudgins, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; McDonald, Ranking Minority Member; Kraft, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Gregerson, Irwin, Johnson and Pellicciotti.

Staff: Travis Yonker (786-7383).

Background:

The Department of Corrections (DOC) appoints institutional chaplains for the correctional institutions under its jurisdiction to meet the religious needs of inmates. Chaplains serve as religious program coordinators for all faith groups. Every chaplain must have qualifications consistent with community standards of the faith group to which the chaplain belongs.

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.

A minister or other clergyperson employed as a chaplain in a state institution or agency may receive, in addition to his or her gross salary, a housing allowance as follows:

- the rental value of a home furnished to the person; or
- a housing allowance paid to the person as part of his or her compensation, in an amount equal to the rent or expense of the home, but not more than 40 percent of the person's gross salary.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The employee title chaplain, as used by the DOC is changed to religious coordinator. The housing allowance for chaplains is expanded to cover religious coordinators.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill restricts the employee title change from chaplain to religious coordinator to only those positions under the authority of the DOC. The substitute bill also consistently applies the term religious coordinator throughout statutes applicable to the DOC.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 29, 2018.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: This bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except for section 3, relating to changing the title "chaplain" to "religious coordinator" for positions under the DOC in the version of RCW 72.01.210, which takes effect July 1, 2019.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill addresses the importance that practicing one's faith plays in rehabilitation. The term chaplain tends to reference Judeo-Christian faiths, and the term religious coordinator is more inclusive. The new title would also encourage more diverse recruiting. Rehabilitation that includes faith reduces recidivism. The term religious coordinator describes better what chaplains currently do.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Frame, prime sponsor; and Gabriel Galanda, Huy Tribe.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.