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HOUSE BILL 2583

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State of Washington

65th Legislature

2018 Regular Session

By Representatives Macri, Gregerson, Frame, Pollet, Dolan, Peterson, Appleton, Wylie, Cody, Tarleton, Robinson, Doglio, and Ormsby

Read first time 01/10/18. Referred to Committee on Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs.

1 AN ACT Relating to local authority to address affordable housing  
2 needs through regulation of rent and associated charges; creating a  
3 new section; and repealing RCW 35.21.830 and 36.01.130.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds as follows:

6 (a) There is a housing emergency throughout Washington state.  
7 Safe, accessible, and affordable housing is a cornerstone of a civil  
8 and humane society. Yet, because of steep rent costs, thousands of  
9 families throughout our state do not have access to this fundamental  
10 human necessity.

11 (b) Rents have increased sharply in Washington state in the last  
12 several years, not just in the Puget Sound corridor, but across the  
13 state. Meanwhile, wage increases have not kept up with rent  
14 increases, particularly for middle and lower wage earners.

15 (c) The prolonged renting crisis our state faces  
16 disproportionately impacts low-income and working class families,  
17 people of color, women, immigrants, seniors, people with  
18 disabilities, and the LGBTQ community. Disproportionate rates of  
19 poverty exacerbate the renting crisis for these populations.

20 (d) High renting costs damage business prospects, especially for  
21 small businesses. The exorbitant cost of housing forces many workers

1 to live far away from their jobs or to look elsewhere for work,  
2 threatening the vitality of Washington's leading industries. The more  
3 money renters spend on rent, the less money they can afford to spend  
4 on local businesses.

5 (e) Rising rents are connected to rising rates of homelessness.  
6 Studies find that a one hundred dollar rent increase is correlated  
7 with a rise in homelessness of between six and thirty-two percent.  
8 The rate of homelessness in rural, suburban, and urban communities  
9 throughout Washington will continue to skyrocket unless these  
10 communities are empowered to fully address this crisis.

11 (f) The rise in homelessness has also burdened local school  
12 districts who have been forced to deal with a sharp rise in homeless  
13 students. Homeless students numbered a little over twenty-six  
14 thousand in the 2010-11 school year; by the 2015-16 school year, the  
15 number of homeless students was almost forty thousand. Students  
16 experiencing homelessness are more likely to suffer academically,  
17 drop out of school, and have higher absentee rates. They score, on  
18 average, substantially lower on state tests. By negatively impacting  
19 educational outcomes, the rental and homelessness crises negatively  
20 impact local districts and the ability of districts to provide  
21 quality educational opportunities for students.

22 (g) Existing state law unduly restrains local governments from  
23 fully determining how to handle housing policies within their  
24 jurisdictions while, at the same time, Washington's housing and  
25 homelessness crises have disproportionately become the responsibility  
26 and burden of local governments.

27 (2) The legislature therefore intends to give cities, towns, and  
28 counties the freedom to address Washington's ongoing housing and  
29 homelessness crises by abolishing statewide bans on local laws that  
30 regulate rent.

31 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The following acts or parts of acts are  
32 each repealed:

33 (1) RCW 35.21.830 (Controls on rent for residential structures—  
34 Prohibited—Exceptions) and 1981 c 75 s 1; and

35 (2) RCW 36.01.130 (Controls on rent for residential structures—  
36 Prohibited—Exceptions) and 1991 c 363 s 43 & 1981 c 75 s 2.

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