

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2579

As Passed House:
February 12, 2020

Title: An act relating to establishing a wild horse holding and training program at Coyote Ridge corrections center.

Brief Description: Establishing a wild horse holding and training program at Coyote Ridge corrections center.

Sponsors: Representatives Dye, Eslick, Klippert and Ormsby.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Public Safety: 1/27/20, 1/30/20 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/12/20, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Corrections to conduct a feasibility study for a wild horse training and holding program at the Coyote Ridge Corrections Center.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Goodman, Chair; Davis, Vice Chair; Appleton, 2nd Vice Chair; Klippert, Ranking Minority Member; Sutherland, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Graham, Griffey, Lovick, Orwall, Pellicciotti and Pettigrew.

Staff: Riley O'Leary (786-7296) and Kelly Leonard (786-7147).

Background:

Department of Corrections.

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.

Correctional Industries. The Department of Corrections (DOC) provides work programs to persons incarcerated in its facilities through its Correctional Industries Division. There are different classifications of correctional industry work programs. Some participants receive financial compensation for their work, while others are performed without financial compensation for the benefit of the community. The DOC deducts taxes and legal financial obligations from any wages a person may earn in a work program.

Coyote Ridge Corrections Center. Coyote Ridge Corrections Center (CRCC) is a DOC medium security prison located in Connell, Washington. Offenders at CRCC may participate in several work and vocational programs including a textile factory, groundskeeping, welding, and some work off-site in highly supervised jobs. The CRCC has an average daily population of 2,500 incarcerated individuals.

Farrier Science Certificates.

A farrier specializes in the care of equine hooves. Until last year, the Walla Walla Community College offered a farrier science certification program. To earn a farrier science certificate, a person focuses on understanding horse anatomy, disease, leg and hoof lameness, and therapeutic measures. Participants are prepared to improve or correct faulty gaits, treat feet disorders, and relieve pain to an injured leg or hoof. The program also prepares participants for the test administered by the American Farriers Association. The program recently closed due to low enrollment.

Arizona Wild Horse Program.

The Arizona Correctional Industries and the Bureau of Land Management Wild Horse and Burro Program collaborate on the Wild Horse Inmate Program, which employs a staff of professional horse trainers and teaches inmates how to domesticate wild horses. Horses are trained in a facility located at the state prison. The facility also includes a holding center, and the public may adopt horses trained through the program.

Summary of Bill:

The DOC is required to study, evaluate, and report on the feasibility of implementing a wild horse training and holding program at the CRCC. The program must be designed in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management's Wild Horse and Burro Program. The DOC must consult with the state Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources, the Washington State University, Walla Walla Community College, and other appropriate agencies. The DOC must evaluate similar programs from other states and ensure the plan uses natural horsemanship.

The study and plan must include several specific elements. For example, the DOC must develop construction options for facilities and determine the costs of the program with consideration for safety and welfare of incarcerated persons, staff, and the horses, while maintaining appropriate levels of security. The DOC must evaluate the availability of land and water necessary to support the program, including the availability of public and private land adjacent to the CRCC.

The DOC must evaluate necessary steps to develop a partnership with the Walla Walla Community College to offer a farrier certificate program for program participants. Further, the DOC must consult with the Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine to determine if students can practice care at the facilities.

The DOC must submit a report to the Governor and Legislature by November 1, 2020, and include a summary of any changes to state law necessary to implement the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill would direct the DOC to examine the feasibility of implementing a horse training and holding program in Washington. There are similar programs across the country that have positively changed the lives of hundreds of people and saved the lives of thousands of horses. The program can be set up in two phases, training and holding. Some program facilities can hold over 1,000 horses and are mostly self-funded. Facilities can be constructed on prison grounds using labor from within the prison. They are remarkable facilities that are well-designed and treat the horses well. Washington has some of the best grass in the country for horse feed.

In similar programs, mustangs are brought in from the range and partnered with inmates who learn to handle and treat horses, which are later adopted by the public. The skills that inmates learn throughout these programs are desired in the equine industry and train participants for various jobs.

About 95 percent of incarcerated individuals return to society. These horse programs help individuals rehabilitate and return home as productive members of society, excellent employees, dependable husbands, and committed fathers. Horses have a lasting impact on people that can affect self-image, confidence, and state of mind, for example, by reminding participants that cutting corners can sometimes make life more difficult and that patience and empathy are important.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Dye, prime sponsor; Ruben Villasenor; Zachary Kinneman; and Barbara Kinneman.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.