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**HOUSE BILL 1566**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2021 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Pollet, Frame, Valdez, Dolan, Wicks, Callan, Bateman, Kloba, Macri, Sells, Abbarno, Taylor, Berg, Goodman, Bergquist, Shewmake, Rule, Paul, Harris-Talley, and Simmons

AN ACT Relating to access and representation for individuals with disabilities in the legislative process; adding new sections to chapter 44.04 RCW; and creating new sections.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  This act shall be known and cited as the nothing about us without us act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature recognizes that people with disabilities are often left out of the policy decisions that affect them most. Disabled people have lived experience navigating societal barriers and are therefore best equipped to find solutions through these barriers. According to the department of social and health services, approximately 13 percent of state residents live with a disability. People with disabilities face greater hardships finding and maintaining employment that pays a living wage, attaining higher education, and finding places to live. The poverty rate for disabled people in Washington is 20 percent, which is nearly twice the rate for people without disabilities. In addition, people with disabilities are employed at less than half the rate of people without disabilities. Because disabled people make less money, and their income is often supplemented by the government, they may have trouble finding places to live. Additionally, affordable housing is not always accessible housing. People with disabilities know these struggles firsthand, so it is essential that they have the opportunity to participate in and guide decision-making processes.

(2) The legislature finds people with disabilities are almost entirely unrepresented in policy making. A governing body that makes decisions about disability, cannot do so effectively without the voices of that group present.

(3) Therefore, the legislature intends to ensure meaningful participation from disabled people on each task force, select committee, work group, advisory committee, or other statutory entity that makes decisions affecting disabled people. When people with disabilities have a seat at the table, Washington thrives.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 44.04 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The membership of any task force, select committee, work group, advisory committee, or other statutory entity whose activities are related to issues directly involving individuals with disabilities must reflect the diversity of people with lived experience with disabilities, including members with differing cultural and economic circumstances.

(2) Membership must consist of at least three people with disabilities who have experience with the identified issue being addressed by the group. This requirement includes participation by three people with intellectual and developmental disabilities when the issues being addressed directly relate to services or conditions relating to such persons.

(3) No members are required to be added to an entity so long as its membership is in compliance with subsection (1) of this section.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 44.04 RCW to read as follows:

The chief clerk of the house of representatives and the secretary of the senate must:

(1) Consult with the governor's committee on disability issues and employment, the developmental disabilities council, and the state office of equity to identify:

(a) Common barriers to access and to meaningful participation in stakeholder engagement conducted by members of the legislature and legislative standing committees; and

(b) Accommodations and modifications to stakeholder engagement processes that are consistent with the Americans with disabilities act, chapter 49.60 RCW, and principles of universal design and access;

(2) Present findings under subsection (1)(a) of this section to members of the legislature and to legislative staff by December 1, 2021; and

(3) Ensure that any relevant training material or guidance that is provided to members of the legislature or to legislative staff:

(a) Describes the requirements in section 3 of this act;

(b) Strongly encourages the inclusion of individuals with disabilities as participants and subject matter experts in committee work sessions on the topic of disabilities;

(c) Includes information about providing barrier-free access and the types of accommodations that are available to ensure that individuals with disabilities have full access to public meetings and other public legislative events; and

(d) Includes the recommendations provided by the governor's committee on disability issues and employment, the developmental disabilities council, and the state office of equity solicited under subsection (1) of this section.

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