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**SENATE BILL 5607**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2022 Regular Session**

**By** Senators L. Wilson, Braun, Hasegawa, Rolfes, Wellman, and J. Wilson

AN ACT Relating to including individuals in jails and hospitals who were homeless before entering such facilities in the state's annual homeless census; amending RCW 43.185C.030; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds the official annual point-in-time count of homeless individuals in Washington state significantly understates the extent of Washington's homelessness problem by excluding individuals who are in jail or in a hospital on the day of the count but were homeless before entering the facility. In Thurston county, which voluntarily collects this information, the most recent count found that individuals in jails and hospitals who were homeless before entering such facilities would have increased the county's official homeless census by almost 40 percent.

To ensure more accurate information for policymakers and enable better informed policy responses, it is the intent of the legislature with this act to require each county to include individuals in jails and hospitals who were homeless before entering such facilities in its annual homelessness point-in-time count and report.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.185C.030 and 2018 c 85 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The department shall annually conduct a Washington homeless census or count consistent with the requirements of RCW 43.185C.180. The census shall make every effort to count all homeless individuals living outdoors, in shelters, and in transitional housing, coordinated, when reasonably feasible, with already existing homeless census projects including those funded in part by the United States department of housing and urban development under the McKinney-Vento homeless assistance program. In addition, the census shall make every effort to count individuals who are currently admitted into hospitals or incarcerated in city or county jails who had no permanent address at the time of admission. The department shall determine, in consultation with local governments, the data to be collected. Data on subpopulations and other characteristics of the homeless must, at a minimum, be consistent with the United States department of housing and urban development's point-in-time requirements. Data and information collected about individuals who are currently admitted into hospitals or incarcerated in city or county jails and had no permanent address at the time of admission are not required to be submitted to the United States department of urban housing and development to ensure uniformity of information across states.

(2) All personal information collected in the census is confidential, and the department and each local government shall take all necessary steps to protect the identity and confidentiality of each person counted.

(3) The department and each local government are prohibited from disclosing any personally identifying information about any homeless individual when there is reason to believe or evidence indicating that the homeless individual is an adult or minor victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking or is the parent or guardian of a child victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking; or revealing other confidential information regarding HIV/AIDS status, as found in RCW 70.02.220. The department and each local government shall not ask any homeless housing provider to disclose personally identifying information about any homeless individuals when the providers implementing those programs have reason to believe or evidence indicating that those clients are adult or minor victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking or are the parents or guardians of child victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Summary data for the provider's facility or program may be substituted.

(4) The Washington homeless census shall be conducted annually on a schedule created by the department. The department shall make summary data by county available to the public each year. This data, and its analysis, shall be included in the department's annual updated homeless housing program strategic plan.

(5) Based on the annual census and provider information from the local government plans, the department shall, by the end of year four, implement an online information and referral system to enable local governments and providers to identify available housing for a homeless person. The department shall work with local governments and their providers to develop a capacity for continuous case management to assist homeless persons.

(6) By the end of year four, the department shall implement an organizational quality management system.

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