

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1620

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Community & Economic Development

**Title:** An act relating to responding to extreme weather events.

**Brief Description:** Addressing the response to extreme weather events.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Leavitt, Boehnke, Shewmake, Ryu, Robertson, Wicks, Duerr, Ramel, Valdez, Bronoske, Callan, Ramos, Rule, Santos, Simmons, Pollet, Hackney and Taylor.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Community & Economic Development: 1/12/22, 1/14/22 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires the Military Department to develop and implement an extreme weather response grant program for the purpose of assisting with the costs of responding to community needs during periods of extremely hot or cold weather.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Ryu, Chair; Paul, Vice Chair; Boehnke, Ranking Minority Member; Corry, Donaghy, Frame, Johnson, J., Rule and Taylor.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Chase, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Kraft and Sutherland.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Jacobsen.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Staff:** Emily Poole (786-7106).

**Background:**

The state's role in disaster recovery depends on the complexity of an incident and the capacity of a local jurisdiction or tribe to manage recovery efforts. In general, the state functions as a coordinating entity for state and federal resources and facilitates relationships between jurisdictions, agencies and private organizations.

The Military Department (Department) leads and coordinates the state's preparedness, response, and recovery efforts to minimize the impacts of disasters and emergencies, including by coordinating a number of grants available to state and local jurisdictions. The Adjutant General is required to administer a state program for emergency assistance to individuals who are victims of a natural disaster. Natural disasters include events that demand immediate action to protect public health or to provide relief to affected communities, as well as events that reach such a degree of destructiveness as to warrant the governor proclaiming a state of emergency. The emergency assistance program may include grants, loans, gifts of services, equipment, supplies, or funds to individuals who need assistance and who meet certain eligibility standards. Funds from the Disaster Response Account in the state treasury may be used for support of state agency and local government disaster response and recovery efforts.

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**Summary of Bill:**

The Military Department (Department) is required to develop and implement an extreme weather response grant program for the purpose of assisting political subdivisions and federally recognized tribes with the costs of responding to community needs during periods of extremely hot or cold weather. The Department may adopt rules to administer the program. The Department may award grants to political subdivisions and federally recognized tribes for reimbursement of costs if the costs are incurred:

1. by communities that have demonstrated a lack of local resources to address community needs; and
2. for the benefit of socially vulnerable populations.

Costs associated with the following activities are eligible for reimbursement:

- establishing and operating warming and cooling centers;
- transporting individuals to warming and cooling centers;
- purchasing supplies needed for cooling of congregate living settings;
- providing emergency temporary housing; and
- other related activities necessary for life safety.

Funds from the Disaster Response Account may be used to award grants as part of the extreme weather response grant program.

For purposes of these requirements, "political subdivision" means any county, city, or town that has established a local organization for emergency management or any joint local organization for emergency management.

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**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) Periods of extreme weather are becoming more common. Local jurisdictions are often unprepared to meet community needs during extremely hot or cold weather, and rural and small communities often face a greater impact. It is also difficult for local communities to make funding decisions regarding unpredictable weather. Cities have to balance setting aside funding for emergencies and using those same funds for other community needs. This bill will help communities make funding decisions and offset the costs of providing life-saving services. Temporary housing solutions provided to individuals can lead to permanent housing solutions. It is important for individuals experiencing homelessness to be called out in emergency management policies. Emergency shelters should have additional outreach capabilities in order to be successful, but adding capabilities increases costs. The bill should be fully funded.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) Local communities face obstacles in setting up warming and cooling centers, including that it is difficult to find suitable locations that are secure and easily accessible. It is also difficult to balance increasing capacity with considerations relating to COVID-19.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Mari Leavitt, prime sponsor; Sharon Swanson, Association of Washington Cities; Hallie McCurdy, West Pierce Fire and Rescue; Maureen Howard, Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness; and Briahna Murray, City of Tacoma.

(Other) Adam Wasserman, Washington Emergency Management Division.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.