H-1270.2

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**HOUSE BILL 1841**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2023 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Ramos, Entenman, Chapman, and Simmons

AN ACT Relating to addressing the Washington state ferries' workforce shortages; adding a new section to chapter 47.60 RCW; creating a new section; providing an effective date; and declaring an emergency.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Washington's marine highways provide vital transportation links between communities. Citizens, businesses, and visitors depend on the state's ferry system to provide safe, dependable auto and passenger service to conduct daily life and commerce activities. The legislature finds that in October 2021, the ferry system adopted an alternative service plan to recognize the lack of availability of staff to meet the United States coast guard requirements for crewing vessels. Even with this plan, service reliability dropped below 95 percent, reflecting the continued struggle of the ferry system to meet crewing requirements. The legislature further finds that the recommendations of the joint transportation committee study on ferry workforce planning, completed in December 2022, provide a pathway for addressing workforce challenges, addressing recruitment, hiring, training, employee development, and succession planning. To be successful, this recommended pathway must integrate into every step of implementation the need for new, equitable systems to achieve a workforce that is inclusive and representative of the diversity of Washington's labor force. The legislature intends to assist the Washington state ferries to meet its workforce challenges, providing resources for implementing employee recruitment, hiring, training, and retention initiatives.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 47.60 RCW to read as follows:

For the purpose of increasing the capacity of human resources functions available to the Washington state ferries as it works to address its staffing shortage:

(1) The department shall contract out for the administration of human resources management for the Washington state ferries. To the extent practicable, all functions of human resources management for the Washington state ferries must be performed under the contract including, but not limited to, outreach and recruitment, hiring processes, applicant assistance, workforce planning, employee engagement, and employee retention.

(2) The Washington state ferries shall adopt a formal strategy to implement diversity, equity, and inclusion as an essential part of its implementation of the recommendations of the 2022 joint transportation committee study on ferry workforce planning. The consultant contract for human resources management required in this section must include a specific requirement to develop this strategy.

(3) The competitive procurement process must select and hire an independent, expert consultant with a background in the incorporation of diversity, equity, and inclusion principals in human resources management.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect July 1, 2023.

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