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**HOUSE BILL 2457**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2024 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Davis, Ryu, Rule, Santos, Chopp, Barkis, and Pollet

AN ACT Relating to emergency housing for domestic violence survivors; adding new sections to chapter 43.280 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an expiration date.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that domestic violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness for women and children. Among women who are unhoused, between 22 and 57 percent report that domestic violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness. In Washington state, domestic violence shelters are routinely full, leaving victims and children in serious danger with nowhere to go. Though domestic violence survivors are often fleeing life-threatening situations and face unique barriers to housing, there are no state housing programs targeted towards this population. Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature to create a domestic violence emergency housing voucher program, a domestic violence emergency housing program in the capital budget for acquisition of properties, and a time-limited task force to propose creative solutions to address immediate housing needs for survivors who have nowhere to turn.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.280 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the domestic violence emergency housing voucher program is created within the office of crime victims advocacy to provide housing vouchers to assist in obtaining stable housing for persons who are fleeing or have recently fled intimate partner violence.

(2) Priority for the domestic violence emergency housing voucher program must be provided to survivors who face the greatest risk of serious violence and have the least access to housing resources.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.280 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for the specific purposes provided in this section, the department of commerce must establish a competitive grant program to award funding to community-based domestic violence programs as defined in RCW 70.123.020 to acquire or renovate housing units for the purpose of providing emergency housing to individuals who are in immediate risk or imminent danger from intimate partner violence. When evaluating applications for this grant program, the department, in collaboration with the department of social and health services, must prioritize projects that demonstrate:

(a) A strong readiness to proceed to operation of the emergency housing;

(b) A commitment by the applicant to provide furnishings and other support services to the tenants; and

(c) The program has a high demand for emergency shelter services or hotel vouchers.

(2) In awarding funding for projects, the department of commerce must strive for geographic distribution.

(3) In contracts for grants authorized under this section, the department of commerce must include provisions that require that capital improvements be held by the grantee for a specified period of time appropriate to the amount of the grant and that facilities be used for the express purpose of the grant. If the grantee is found to be out of compliance with provisions of the contract, the grantee must repay to the state general fund the principal amount of the grant plus interest calculated at the rate of interest on state of Washington general obligation bonds issued on the date most close in time to the date of authorization of the grant.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.280 RCW to read as follows:

(1) A task force on domestic violence emergency housing is established, with members as provided in this subsection (1). The office of crime victims advocacy shall appoint the following members:

(a) Four survivors who have experienced housing instability as a result of fleeing an intimate partner violence situation. At least two of these members must be survivors who fled with minor children;

(b) Four community-based domestic violence agencies;

(c) Two victim advocates embedded in law enforcement who work with survivors of intimate partner violence;

(d) Two victim advocates embedded in prosecutor's offices who work with survivors of intimate partner violence;

(e) The executive director, or the director's designee, of a nonprofit law firm in Washington that seeks to improve the legal response to survivors of sexual violence;

(f) A representative from a statewide nonprofit law firm which offers publicly funded legal aid programs that work with survivors of intimate partner violence;

(g) The director, or the director's designee, of an advocacy unit within the prosecutor's office of the most populous county in Washington that assists residents who are experiencing domestic violence by a current or former intimate partner as they navigate the protection order process; and

(h) The executive director, or the director's designee, of a coalition based in Washington which provides culturally specific technical assistance to tribes and tribal programs in the work of preventing and eliminating domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, and sex trafficking.

(2) The task force shall propose recommendations to increase the supply of immediate, short-term, secure housing options for survivors fleeing imminent danger due to intimate partner violence. In addition to other ideas, the task force shall consider:

(a) The feasibility and practical considerations involved in the following program concepts:

(i) Creating a network of trained volunteers who possess an accessory dwelling unit, detached accessory dwelling unit, or spare bedroom and are willing to take in survivors;

(ii) Launching a program wherein owners of short-term vacation rentals could lend their properties for a fixed number of nights per year for this purpose;

(iii) Creating a network of faith-based organizations that would allow an unused parsonage or other location on the property of a house of worship to be used for this purpose; and

(iv) Using fairgrounds for this purpose.

(b) Whether providing property tax incentives to the property owners who participate in these programs would be an effective means of encouraging their participation and, if so, how such an incentive program could be structured.

(c) The feasibility and practical considerations involved in launching a program patterned after the Los Angeles county fire safe house program, wherein domestic violence victims in immediate danger could seek temporary shelter at fire stations.

(3) Staff support for the task force must be provided by the office of crime victims advocacy.

(4) The task force shall report its findings and recommendations to the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 1, 2025.

(5) This section expires June 1, 2026.

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