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**SENATE BILL 5601**

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

**By** Senators C. Wilson, Frame, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Lovelett, Lovick, Nguyen, Randall, Robinson, and Valdez

AN ACT Relating to the creation of a youth development office and grant program within the department of commerce; adding new sections to chapter 43.330 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that youth development programs have provided after-school, summer, mentoring, and wraparound supports to Washington children and youth for over 100 years.

Youth development programs: Provide caring adults, structured and unstructured learning, and development activities; assist students in developing postsecondary and career pathways; and provide a safe and supportive environment outside of the classroom, in the school settings, the community, and the home. The legislature further finds that youth development programs have demonstrated impact and research to show that programs can improve academic and social-emotional outcomes and increase the chances that disengaged students will reengage with school.

The legislature recognizes that the afterschool alliance America after 3PM report showed that 64 percent of parents in Washington state reported after-school programs as too expensive in 2020, compared to 39 percent in 2014. Additionally, 49 percent of parents reported that after-school programs were not available in their community in 2020. In the 2021 Washington healthy youth survey, teens of color were less likely to report access to out-of-school activities and service clubs than their white peers.

The legislature declares that youth development programs have been and continue to be essential to healthy and more equitable communities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these programs: Provided responsive child care, educational programming, homework support, and mentoring; delivered basic need and homework packets; and assisted students with technology issues in the home. Many youth development programs were providing synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities for children in child care and for many youth struggling with or lacking access to virtual learning from their K-12 school home. Yet, no state agency has purview of or a comprehensive system of support for youth development programming, which became very apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The legislature therefore resolves to create the office of youth development in the department of commerce to administer grant programs to youth development programs, agencies, and organizations and to administer services designed to increase public access to youth development programs.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The definitions in this section apply to sections 3 and 4 of this act unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Expanded learning opportunities" means a structured learning environment that occurs outside the traditional school day through before-school, after-school, and summer programs. "Expanded learning opportunities" offer a safe place for students where education can be supported and supplemented. "Expanded learning opportunities" offer personalized learning opportunities, mentorship, or general academic support for youth in areas such as:

(a) The arts including, but not limited to, the performing arts, visual arts, literature, fine arts, craft arts, creative writing, architecture, and music;

(b) Civic engagement;

(c) Science;

(d) Technology;

(e) Engineering; and

(f) Math.

(2) "Office" means the office of youth development in the department of commerce created in section 3 of this act.

(3) "Youth development" means an intentional, strength-based approach that inclusively and equitably engages young people within their communities in a manner that centers youth voice and leadership. "Youth development" is culturally responsive, fosters positive relationships, and helps young people develop skills and competencies to achieve their goals.

(4) "Youth development program" means a program for youth that focuses on holistic outcomes by complementing school-day academics, promotes social and emotional well-being, and supports access to postsecondary career pathways. "Youth development programs" may not provide basic needs services such as shelter or food outside of program time, but they can function as a referral resource to help young people and families identify and navigate those services. A youth development program may include mentoring, expanded learning opportunities, before-school, after-school or summer programs, school-aged child care, or other child supports that address the comprehensive needs of young people.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The office of youth development is created in the department. The office shall:

(1) Administer a grant program as described in section 4 of this act;

(2) Work with relevant state agencies, youth development intermediaries, providers, and youth to develop recommendations to reduce barriers for youth accessing programs and/or providers and to reduce barriers to providers accessing funding;

(3) Convene and coordinate with youth development providers and programs to allow for peer and professional learning, sharing of resources, and enhanced capacity as funding is available;

(4) Maintain a resource hub to provide a statewide program locator system for consumers, and to collect, analyze, and report data.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) Subject to the amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the office shall develop and implement a grant program that provides grant funding to youth development programs in the state that provide:

(a) Learning acceleration;

(b) Social-emotional learning;

(c) Mentorship;

(d) Connection to nonschool-based resources;

(e) Support related to postsecondary access and career pathways;

(f) Arts programming including, but not limited to, the performing arts, visual arts, literature, fine arts, craft arts, creative writing, architecture, and music; or

(g) Cultural programming.

(2) In designing the grant program required under this section, the office shall engage with and consider feedback from the following groups with representation from all six department of children, youth, and families regions of the state:

(a) Youth ages 14 through 26;

(b) People with lived experience providing or receiving services from a youth development program;

(c) Youth development program providers serving local communities and operating statewide;

(d) Youth development program providers serving local communities and not operating statewide;

(e) Statewide and local youth development intermediaries;

(f) Indian tribes within Washington state; and

(g) The department of children, youth, and families and the office of the superintendent of public instruction.

(3) The design of the grant program for youth development programs required under this section must include the following components:

(a) Equity in:

(i) Size and type of organizations receiving the grants;

(ii) Geographic distribution of grant funding throughout all six department of children, youth, and families regions of the state; and

(iii) Distribution of grant funding to urban, suburban, and rural areas;

(b) Prioritization of grants for programs serving youth and communities furthest removed from opportunity and who have been historically marginalized;

(c) Distribution of grants to nonprofit entities, entities sponsored by a nonprofit organization, tribes within Washington state, and city or county parks and recreation entities;

(d) The prohibition of grant distribution to school districts;

(e) Distribution of grant funding for the full fiscal biennium;

(f) An outcome framework for grant funding recipients that demonstrates positive youth outcomes. The outcome framework shall not require access to data that the program itself cannot supply from within the program such as school-related data. The outcome framework shall be cost-efficient for the agency and for programs with limited staffing and infrastructure; and outcomes shall be disaggregated to the greatest extent possible. Technical assistance for providers shall be made available related to data collection and reporting;

(g) A requirement that grant recipients include youth with physical and developmental disabilities to the extent possible;

(h) A process for providing training regarding youth behavioral health and trauma-informed service delivery to youth development program staff at no cost or little cost to the youth development program; and

(i) A requirement that grant recipients take steps to encourage parent and family engagement.

(4) To the extent allowable under law, the department shall include youth in reviewing grant applications pursuant to RCW 43.03.220.

(5) By October 1, 2026, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the office shall submit a report to the relevant committees of the legislature that shall include at a minimum:

(a) An outcomes evaluation of the grant program described in this section;

(b) Recommendations for improving access to youth development programs for consumers;

(c) Recommendations for expanding youth development programs.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Sections 2 through 4 of this act are each added to chapter 43.330 RCW.

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