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**SENATE BILL 5707**

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

**By** Senators Kuderer, Lovelett, Nguyen, Nobles, and C. Wilson

AN ACT Relating to establishing a housing court pilot program; amending RCW 59.18.370; adding new sections to chapter 59.18 RCW; and providing an expiration date.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 59.18 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Subject to amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the administrative office of the courts shall conduct a housing court pilot program.

(2) The pilot program sites shall be the district court serving counties:

(a) West of the crest of the Cascade mountains with populations of 2,000,000 or more; and

(b) East of the crest of the Cascade mountains with populations greater than 500,000.

(3) The administrative office of the courts shall develop criteria for the housing court pilot program.

(4) The pilot program shall include:

(a) All residential case types arising under this chapter and chapter 59.12 RCW;

(b) Housing court judicial officers who meet training requirements established by local court rule;

(c) Case management practices that provide a flexible response to the diverse court-related needs of landlords and tenants. Case management practices should result in an efficient use of time and resources and create a system enabling multiple case type resolutions by one judicial officer or judicial team;

(d) A court facilitator to provide assistance to parties with matters before the housing court; and

(e) An emphasis on providing nonadversarial methods of dispute resolution such as a settlement conference and mediation by attorney mediators.

(5) Any municipal court participating in the housing court pilot program must report annually to the administrative office of the courts beginning January 1, 2024, on the following:

(a) The number of actions that were subject to program requirements; and

(b) The number of actions that were resolved where both parties had counsel.

(6) By December 1, 2024, and annually thereafter, the administrative office of the courts must provide a report to the legislature summarizing the report data shared by the municipal courts under subsection (4) of this section.

(7) This section expires July 1, 2033.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 59.18 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The judges of the district courts with housing court pilot programs shall adopt court rules directing the program. The court rules shall comply with the criteria established by the administrative office of the courts and shall include:

(a) A requirement that all judicial officers hearing cases in housing court:

(i) Complete an initial training program covering the laws and procedures that govern residential landlords and tenants, including forcible entry and forcible and unlawful detainer;

(ii) Subsequent to the training in (a) of this subsection, annually attend a minimum of eight hours of continuing education of pertinence to the housing court;

(b) Case management that is based on the practice of one judge or judicial teams handling all matters relating to the types of cases listed in section 1(4) of this act;

(c) Programs that provide for record confidentiality by sealing eviction records to protect the confidentiality of court records in accordance with the law. However, law enforcement agencies shall have access to the records to the extent permissible under the law.

(2) This section expires July 1, 2033.

**Sec.**  RCW 59.18.370 and 2005 c 130 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

The plaintiff, at the time of commencing an action of forcible entry or detainer or unlawful detainer, or at any time afterwards, upon filing the complaint, may apply to the superior court, or district court, in which the action is pending for an order directing the defendant to appear and show cause, if any he or she has, why a writ of restitution should not issue restoring to the plaintiff possession of the property in the complaint described, and the judge shall by order fix a time and place for a hearing of the motion, which shall not be less than seven nor more than ((~~thirty~~)) 30 days from the date of service of the order upon defendant. A copy of the order, together with a copy of the summons and complaint if not previously served upon the defendant, shall be served upon the defendant. The order shall notify the defendant that if he or she fails to appear and show cause at the time and place specified by the order the court may order the sheriff to restore possession of the property to the plaintiff and may grant such other relief as may be prayed for in the complaint and provided by this chapter.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Section 3 of this act expires July 1, 2033.

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