

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1543

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Human Services, March 21, 2023

Title: An act relating to establishing a wild horse holding and training program at Coyote Ridge corrections center.

Brief Description: Establishing a wild horse holding and training program at Coyote Ridge corrections center.

Sponsors: Representatives Dye, Kretz, Springer, Graham, Eslick, Mosbrucker, Chapman, Ryu, Wylie, Klicker, Couture and Davis.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/27/23, 95-0.

Committee Activity: Human Services: 3/13/23, 3/21/23 [DP, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Corrections (DOC), through Correctional Industries, to conduct a feasibility study and develop a plan to implement a wild horse training, holding, and farrier program at Coyote Ridge Corrections Center.
- Directs DOC to submit a report and implementation plan to the Governor and Legislature by November 1, 2023.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Wilson, C., Chair; Kauffman, Vice Chair; Boehnke, Ranking Member; Frame, Warnick and Wilson, J..

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Nguyen.

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: Kelsey-anne Fung (786-7479)

Background: Correctional Industries. The Department of Corrections (DOC) operates a comprehensive work program for persons incarcerated in its facilities through its Correctional Industries (CI) program. CI operates businesses within all prison facilities throughout the state and employs approximately 2200 inmates across five classes of industries. Some participants in CI work programs receive financial compensation for their work, while others are performed without financial compensation for the benefit of the community. Any wages or gratuities that a person may earn in a work program are subject to tax and other various deductions depending on the industry classification.

Coyote Ridge Corrections Center. Coyote Ridge Corrections Center (CRCC) is a minimum and medium custody level male prison located in Connell, Washington. Incarcerated individuals at CRCC may participate in several work and vocational programs including auto repair, building maintenance, groundkeepers, information technology, and welding. CI employs incarcerated individuals at CRCC in their laundry operation, textiles factory, pillow and mattress factory, food service operations, and business office services. The CRCC has a maximum capacity of 2468 incarcerated males.

Farrier Science Certificate. A farrier specializes in the care of equine hooves and horse shoeing. The Walla Walla Community College (WWCC) stopped offering its one-year certificate program and two-year associate's degree in farrier science in June 2019 due to low enrollment. The farrier science program at WWCC had been in place since 1974, and focused on horse anatomy, disease, leg and hoof lameness, and therapeutic measures. Participants learned to improve or correct faulty gaits, treat feet disorders, and relieve pain to an injured leg or hoof. The program also prepared participants for the practical test administered by the American Farriers Association.

Federal Bureau of Land Management Wild Horse and Burro Program. The U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Wild Horse and Burro Program manages and protects the nation's unbranded, unclaimed, free-roaming wild horses and burros on 26.9 million acres of public lands across ten western states. The federal Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 authorizes BLM to remove excess wild horses and burros from the range to sustain the health and productivity of public lands. BLM maintains a large network of permanent off-range corral adoption and purchase centers to facilitate the placement of wild horses and burros into private care through adoptions and sales. Some corrals are located within a correctional facility and only conduct periodic public adoption events.

Arizona Wild Horse Training and Holding Program. In 2012, Arizona Correctional Industries and BLM partnered to create the Wild Horse Inmate Program (WHIP), where inmates learn how to tame and domesticate wild horses and burros obtained from BLM so they can be offered for adoption. WHIP employs a staff of professional horse trainers who provide horsemanship, animal husbandry, and farrier skills. The training facility is located

within the prison, and horses and burros are fed and cared for in a holding center across from the prison complex. According to BLM, WHIP fosters a positive bond between inmates and animals, ensures the horses and burros are cared for, trained, and placed in good homes, and serves as a unique rehabilitation opportunity for inmates to develop patience and learn responsibility. Inmates receive hands-on training in the equestrian field and gain employable skills they can use upon release. Members of the public, including law enforcement agencies and ranchers, may adopt trained and untrained horses and burros for a fee.

Summary of Bill: DOC, through CI, must conduct a feasibility study and develop a plan for implementing a wild horse training, holding, and farrier program (program) at CRCC. The program must be designed in partnership with BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program to assist incarcerated persons with developing occupational, vocational, and life skills.

In conducting the study and developing the implementation plan, DOC must consult with BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program, state Department of Natural Resources, state Department of Agriculture, WWCC, Washington State University (WSU), other appropriate state and federal agencies, local governments, and experts in the field of wild horse management and training.

DOC must:

- ensure the plan uses natural horsemanship for gentling and training;
- evaluate and consult with similar programs in other states, including reviewing existing agreements with BLM and studying operations and facilities used by those programs;
- develop design and construction options, which must consider facility security, staff and inmate safety, the welfare of horses, and sourcing cost-effective materials;
- determine costs of establishing and maintaining operations, facilities, and staff, which must consider using CI for constructing, maintaining, and operating facilities, financial support from BLM for holding the horses, and leveraging federal funding;
- evaluate the availability of land and water necessary to support the program, which must evaluate current state and adjacent public and private property that can be used for hay production and holding and training facilities;
- evaluate steps necessary to partner with WWCC to establish a course for qualifying participants to obtain a farrier certificate in conjunction with the program, that may include a business class to assist with managing farrier careers after release;
- consult with WSU to determine whether the college of veterinary medicine may have students practice care at the training and holding facilities; and
- assess any changes to state statutes or DOC policies necessary to implement the program.

DOC must complete the study and submit a report and implementation plan to the Governor and Legislature by November 1, 2023.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill passed the Legislature in 2020, but the Governor vetoed it due to COVID. This bill protects land from overgrazing and overuse and provides a rehabilitative opportunity to incarcerated individuals. Through this program, incarcerated individuals deal with their own emotions facing a wild animal and it gives them purpose and meaning. A person cannot fake it with a horse. The horse knows your feelings and your mood, and needs care no matter what. This program teaches incarcerated individuals discipline, character, trust, and lessons that last beyond horses. There is an extremely low recidivism rate for incarcerated individuals that go through this program. The trainers look for teachable moments to help incarcerated individuals draw parallels to their own lives like moving on from the past, overcoming obstacles, hate reduction, finding purpose, and delayed gratification.

This also provides a unique opportunity to increase the availability of trained farriers in the state through a partnership with WWCC, so the people coming out of this program can go into private business and provide a needed service to the horse community. This will also be a great opportunity for WSU veterinary students to work with wild animals.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Mary Dye, Prime Sponsor; Mike Hoover, Self; Jeff Chapman, John Wayne Pioneer Wagons and Riders /BCHW; Randy Helm, Helm Horsemanship; Andrew Ma.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.