

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5943

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As of February 2, 2024

**Title:** An act relating to developing a resource data tool to connect Washington residents to services and resources.

**Brief Description:** Developing a resource data tool to connect Washington residents to services and resources. [**Revised for 1st Substitute:** Conducting a feasibility study regarding a resource data tool to connect Washington residents to services and resources.]

**Sponsors:** Senators Gildon, Boehnke, Hasegawa and Wilson, C..

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Human Services: 1/18/24, 1/23/24 [DPS-WM].  
Ways & Means: 2/02/24.

**Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill**

- Directs the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to conduct a feasibility study regarding a resource data tool for the purpose of digitally connecting members of the public to state services, subject to the appropriations.
- Provides that the feasibility study is due to the Legislature by December 1, 2024.
- Directs DSHS is to convene an advisory group to provide feedback and advice regarding the feasibility study, subject to appropriations.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5943 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

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

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*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:** Alison Mendiola 786-7488

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Staff:** Monica Fontaine (786-7341)

**Background:** In 2003 legislation was enacted to create 211 as the official state dialing code for public access to information and referral for health and human services and information about access to services after a disaster. The Washington Information Network (WIN) 211 is a 501(c)(3) corporation that administers the program. WIN 211 awards grants to approved organizations to provide 211 services across the state. Currently, there are eight regional providers.

**Summary of Bill (First Substitute):** Subject to appropriations, DSHS shall conduct a feasibility study regarding a resource data tool for the purpose of digitally connecting members of the public to state services. The feasibility study shall include recommendations for a mobile application for the purpose of assisting users in accessing state and private resources and services. Among other relevant topics, the feasibility study shall examine what other digital public resources exist to prevent potential redundancy of programs and to promote administrative efficiency. The feasibility study shall also consider language access, alternative communications options, and equitable access for individuals living with disabilities or limited access to internet services.

The feasibility study is to be submitted to the Governor and Legislature by December 1, 2024.

Subject to appropriations, DSHS is to convene an advisory group for providing feedback and advice regarding the feasibility study. The advisory group shall be composed of experts, interested parties, individuals with lived experience receiving public benefits, organizations who work in the space of system referral and resource navigation, and other relevant stakeholders. The purpose of the advisory group is to inform the feasibility study, which shall include a plan and framework for launching the resource data tool, a web portal, and a mobile application. The advisory group expires December 1, 2024.

### **EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE (First Substitute):**

Directs DSHS to conduct a feasibility study regarding a resource data tool for the purpose of digitally connecting members of the public to state services. The feasibility study is due to the Legislature by December 1, 2024. DSHS is to convene an advisory group to provide feedback and advice regarding the feasibility study. The advisory group expires December 1, 2024. Subject to appropriations.

**Appropriation:** The bill contains a section or sections to limit implementation to the

availability of amounts appropriated for that specific purpose.

**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 on Original Bill (Human Services):** *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: When people need help with utilities or other necessities, they don't know where to go which is why we need a central database for this information. There are so many organizations, both private and public, doing good work, we need one entity managing this information, including a mobile app that would eventually have real data for example, about how many beds might be available at a shelter as well as directions to that shelter. Consolidating into one location could also result in a savings since right now different agencies are managing their own sites. People are accustomed to getting their information online, so having this information in one place would be great. Right now, when people call 211 and information is provided, it may not be accurate or updated as providers don't always let you know.

OTHER: We need to make sure this information is accessible to people with disabilities.

**Persons Testifying (Human Services):** PRO: Senator Chris Gildon, Prime Sponsor; TIM SULLIVAN, Washington 211; Aundrea Jackson, WA211 and Crisis Connections; Joyce Newsom, People For People; Deb Miller, Action Health Partners.

OTHER: robert wardell, self adovates.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Human Services):** No one.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony on First Substitute (Ways & Means):** PRO: Information referral services have been operating in the state for decades, and directories are a common tool used by service providers. There is a large volume of directories that are duplicative and not regularly updated. Efforts have been made to address these issues since 2018. The advisory group should develop the app and conduct the feasibility study. Any work done should be in tandem with existing efforts. The technology for this tool is being used in other states.

This tool will help people who need access to services.

**Persons Testifying (Ways & Means):** PRO: Senator Chris Gildon, Prime Sponsor; TIM SULLIVAN, Washington 211; robert m wardell, self adovates; Nick Federici, United Ways of the Pacific Northwest; Tim Sullivan, People for People.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means):** No one.