
SENATE BILL 5707

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2023 Regular Session

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

Read first time 02/06/23. Referred to Committee on Law & Justice.

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

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 59.18
6 RCW to read as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

18 (4) The pilot program shall include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 (7) This section expires July 1, 2033.

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 59.18
26 RCW to read as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

8 (2) This section expires July 1, 2033.

9 **Sec. 3.** RCW 59.18.370 and 2005 c 130 s 2 are each amended to
10 read as follows:

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

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** Section 3 of this act expires July 1,
29 2033.

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