

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5669

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*As Reported By House Committee on:  
Housing*

**Title:** An act relating to housing trust fund priorities for projects submitted by regional support networks.

**Brief Description:** Establishing housing trust fund priorities for projects submitted by regional support networks.

**Sponsor(s):** Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Niemi and West).

**Brief History:**

Reported by House Committee on:  
Housing, April 2, 1991, DPA.

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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
HOUSING**

**Majority Report:** *Do pass as amended.* Signed by 8 members: Representatives Nelson, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Mitchell, Ranking Minority Member; Winsley, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ballard; Leonard; Ogden; and Wineberry.

**Staff:** Kenny Pittman (786-7392).

**Background:** The Housing Trust Fund Program, administered by the Department of Community Development, provides either loans or grants or both to local governments, nonprofit organizations, and public housing authorities. The funds from the Housing Trust Fund can be used for a variety of activities that expand the supply of housing for low-income households or households with special housing needs. The household's income cannot exceed 50 percent of the median income, adjusted for household size, for the county where the project is located.

The state's Community Mental Health Act authorizes groups of counties to develop Regional Support Networks and contract with the state for the treatment of mentally ill persons. The Regional Support Networks allow local authorities the flexibility to develop comprehensive mental health systems which are most appropriate and effective for each locality.

The Department of Social and Health Services is authorized to make grants to a county or group of counties to establish and operate community mental health programs. The community mental health programs must be designed to provide services to underserved populations including children, elderly, minorities and the disabled.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** The eligibility criteria in the Housing Trust Fund is revised to include housing for special needs populations that is developed through Regional Support Networks. Regional Support Networks are added as organizations that can receive assistance through the Housing Trust Fund. Funds awarded through the Housing Trust Fund must be made on a geographic, state-wide basis.

The criteria used to evaluate applications for assistance is expanded to include: (a) the degree of commitment from programs that provide funding or support services for projects that provide housing for special needs populations; (b) projects by groups mandated to provide community-based housing for special needs populations; (c) project location and access to available public transportation services; and (d) project location and access to employment centers in the region or area. The low-income occupancy requirement for housing financed with funds from the Housing Trust Fund is increased from 15 years to 25 years.

The evaluation criteria and process is revised to allow the Department of Community Development the flexibility to use appropriate evaluation criteria for a specific type of housing project. When evaluating applications, similar criteria must be used for similar categories of projects. Applications for projects that provide housing and services for the mentally ill cannot be approved unless they are consistent with a six-year capital and operating plan of a Regional Support Network.

Regional Support Networks may receive funding for technical assistance through the Housing Trust Fund and may identify and submit projects for housing and housing support services to the Housing Trust Fund. Projects identified or submitted must be fully integrated with the six-year operating and capital plans of the Regional Support Network.

**Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:** The amended bill: (1) increases the low-income occupancy requirement for projects financed through the Housing Trust Fund from 15 years to 25 years; (2) allows the Department of Community Development to use appropriate evaluation criteria for a specific type of housing project, provided that similar criteria must be used for similar categories of projects; (3) adds evaluation criteria that rates projects based on

their location or access to public transportation and employment centers; and (4) removes specific reference to housing for the mentally ill and regional support networks in the preconstruction technical assistance provisions of the Housing Trust Fund.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** The residential housing needs of the mentally ill are large. Treatment without housing is not effective. Regional Support Networks (RSN) are under a statutory mandate to provide housing for the mentally ill. However, most of these groups need access to technical assistance funds to put projects together. This bill would allow RSNs to apply to the Housing Trust Fund for assistance.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Witnesses:** Senator Niemi, Sponsor (in favor of bill); Pat Thibaudeau, Washington Community Mental Health Council (in favor of bill); and Pat DeBoer (in favor of bill).