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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2113**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2015 Regular Session**

**By** House Early Learning & Human Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Walkinshaw, Walsh, Kagi, Johnson, Appleton, Sawyer, Kilduff, Stanford, Jinkins, Zeiger, Santos, Ortiz-Self, Pollet, and Ormsby)

AN ACT Relating to creating a legislative task force on poverty; creating new sections; and providing an expiration date.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature recognizes that poverty in Washington state is a reality for far too many of our residents and recognizes the inherent dignity of every human being. Poverty occurs statewide in rural, suburban, and urban areas and it has only increased since the great recession of 2007. 14.1 percent of the people live in poverty and of those people: 18.8 percent are children; 21.5 percent are persons living with disabilities; and 8.1 percent are our elders. Sixty-four percent of those who are homeless are persons of color.

(2) Poverty impacts a significant number of state programs and services. A child who is homeless is eighty-seven percent more likely to drop out of school. Temporary assistance for needy families benefits for a family of three are four hundred seventy eight dollars per month, thirty percent of the federal poverty level. The lack of accessible housing remains a significant problem. Those living in poverty suffer from greater health problems. The majority of persons in our juvenile justice and corrections systems come from poverty. Furthermore, income inequality continues to increase.

(3) The legislature recognizes that developing a state focused plan of action toward reducing poverty would have a positive impact on those living in poverty and state programs costs. A focused plan of action would use state resources in a more efficient manner and could potentially result in decreased needs. The convening of thought leaders from across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to develop such a plan can lead to reductions in the number of persons living in poverty.

(4) The legislature intends to establish a legislative task force to develop such a plan.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1)(a) A legislative task force on poverty is established, with members as provided in this subsection.

(i) The president of the senate shall appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the senate.

(ii) The speaker of the house of representatives shall appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of representatives.

(iii) The president of the senate and the speaker of the house of representatives jointly shall appoint eleven members representing a statewide cross-section of leaders in different roles in the private, nonprofit, and public sectors.

(b) The task force shall choose an executive committee to lead the task force. The task force may appoint subcommittees and develop a process for including stakeholders in the work of the task force.

(2) The task force shall develop a comprehensive plan for more effective and efficient poverty relief solutions through identification of pathways out of poverty. System change, bringing down funding barriers, recognizing the individualized approach to create poverty relief, establishing goals, measuring outcomes, and more must be included in the plan.

(3) Staff support for the task force must be provided by the senate committee services and the house of representatives office of program research.

(4) The task force shall meet quarterly.

(5) The task force shall report its initial findings to the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 1, 2015. A final report is due December 1, 2016.

(6) This section expires December 31, 2017.

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