
SENATE BILL 6400

State of Washington

65th Legislature

2018 Regular Session

By Senators Saldaña, Chase, Hasegawa, Hunt, and Kuderer

Read first time 01/15/18. Referred to Committee on Financial Institutions & Insurance.

1 AN ACT Relating to local authority to address affordable housing
2 needs through regulation of rent and associated charges; creating a
3 new section; and repealing RCW 35.21.830 and 36.01.130.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds as follows:

6 (a) There is a housing emergency throughout Washington state.
7 Safe, accessible, and affordable housing is a cornerstone of a civil
8 and humane society. Yet, because of steep rent costs, thousands of
9 families throughout our state do not have access to this fundamental
10 human necessity.

11 (b) Rents have increased sharply in Washington state in the last
12 several years, not just in the Puget Sound corridor, but across the
13 state. Meanwhile, wage increases have not kept up with rent
14 increases, particularly for middle and lower wage earners.

15 (c) The prolonged renting crisis our state faces
16 disproportionately impacts low-income and working class families,
17 people of color, women, immigrants, seniors, people with
18 disabilities, and the LGBTQ community. Disproportionate rates of
19 poverty exacerbate the renting crisis for these populations.

20 (d) High renting costs damage business prospects, especially for
21 small businesses. The exorbitant cost of housing forces many workers

1 to live far away from their jobs or to look elsewhere for work,
2 threatening the vitality of Washington's leading industries. The more
3 money renters spend on rent, the less money they can afford to spend
4 on local businesses.

5 (e) Rising rents are connected to rising rates of homelessness.
6 Studies find that a one hundred dollar rent increase is correlated
7 with a rise in homelessness of between six and thirty-two percent.
8 The rate of homelessness in rural, suburban, and urban communities
9 throughout Washington will continue to skyrocket unless these
10 communities are empowered to fully address this crisis.

11 (f) The rise in homelessness has also burdened local school
12 districts who have been forced to deal with a sharp rise in homeless
13 students. Homeless students numbered a little over twenty-six
14 thousand in the 2010-11 school year; by the 2015-16 school year, the
15 number of homeless students was almost forty thousand. Students
16 experiencing homelessness are more likely to suffer academically,
17 drop out of school, and have higher absentee rates. They score, on
18 average, substantially lower on state tests. By negatively impacting
19 educational outcomes, the rental and homelessness crises negatively
20 impact local districts and the ability of districts to provide
21 quality educational opportunities for students.

22 (g) Existing state law unduly restrains local governments from
23 fully determining how to handle housing policies within their
24 jurisdictions while, at the same time, Washington's housing and
25 homelessness crises have disproportionately become the responsibility
26 and burden of local governments.

27 (2) The legislature therefore intends to give cities, towns, and
28 counties the freedom to address Washington's ongoing housing and
29 homelessness crises by abolishing statewide bans on local laws that
30 regulate rent.

31 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The following acts or parts of acts are
32 each repealed:

33 (1) RCW 35.21.830 (Controls on rent for residential structures—
34 Prohibited—Exceptions) and 1981 c 75 s 1; and

35 (2) RCW 36.01.130 (Controls on rent for residential structures—
36 Prohibited—Exceptions) and 1991 c 363 s 43 & 1981 c 75 s 2.

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