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**SENATE BILL 5503**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2019 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Das, Fortunato, and Takko

AN ACT Relating to state board of health rules regarding on-site sewage systems; amending RCW 70.05.074; adding a new section to chapter 43.20 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that properly functioning on-site sewage systems are an important component of the state's wastewater treatment infrastructure. In order to ensure that on-site sewage systems remain a wastewater treatment option that is economically accessible to a wide sector of the state's population, it is the intent of the legislature to ensure that only requirements that are reasonable, appropriately tailored, and necessary are imposed on the installation, operation, maintenance, or repair of on-site sewage systems.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.20 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Rules adopted by the state board under RCW 43.20.050(3) regarding failures of on-site sewage systems must:

(a) Give first priority to allowing repair and second priority to allowing replacement of an existing conventional on-site sewage system, consisting of a septic tank and drainfield, with a similar conventional system;

(b) Not impose or allow the imposition of more stringent performance requirements of equivalent on-site sewage systems on private entities than public entities; and

(c) Allow a system to be repaired using the least expensive alternative that meets standards and is likely to provide comparable or better long-term sewage treatment and effluent dispersal outcomes.

(2) Rules adopted by the state board under RCW 43.20.050(3) regarding inspections must:

(a) Require any inspection of an on-site sewage system carried out by a certified professional inspector or public agency to be coordinated with the owner of the on-site sewage system prior to accessing the on-site sewage system;

(b) Require any inspection of an on-site sewage system carried out by a certified professional inspector or responsible public agency to be authorized by the owner of the on-site sewage system prior to accessing the on-site sewage system;

(c) Allow, in cases where an inspection has not been authorized by a property owner, the local health jurisdiction to follow the procedures established for an administrative search warrant in RCW 70.118.030; and

(d) Forbid local health jurisdictions from requiring private property owners to grant inspection or maintenance easements for on-site sewage systems as a condition of permit issuance for on-site sewage systems that are located on a single property and service a single dwelling unit.

**Sec.**  RCW 70.05.074 and 1997 c 447 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The local health officer must respond to the applicant for an on-site sewage system permit within thirty days after receiving a fully completed application. The local health officer must respond that the application is either approved, denied, or pending.

(2) If the local health officer denies an application to install an on-site sewage system, the denial must be for cause and based upon public health and environmental protection concerns, including concerns regarding the ability to operate and maintain the system, or conflicts with other existing laws, regulations, or ordinances. A local health officer may not deny or condition a permit application related to an on-site sewage system located on a single property and serving a single dwelling unit upon the granting of an easement allowing for the inspection or maintenance of the on-site sewage system. The local health officer must provide the applicant with a written justification for the denial, along with an explanation of the procedure for appeal.

(3) If the local health officer identifies the application as pending and subject to review beyond thirty days, the local health officer must provide the applicant with a written justification that the site-specific conditions or circumstances necessitate a longer time period for a decision on the application. The local health officer must include any specific information necessary to make a decision and the estimated time required for a decision to be made.

(4) A local health officer may not limit the number of alternative sewage systems within his or her jurisdiction without cause. Any such limitation must be based upon public health and environmental protection concerns, including concerns regarding the ability to operate and maintain the system, or conflicts with other existing laws, regulations, or ordinances. If such a limitation is established, the local health officer must justify the limitation in writing, with specific reasons, and must provide an explanation of the procedure for appealing the limitation.

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