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## Civil Rights & Judiciary Committee

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### ESSB 6288

**Brief Description:** Creating the Washington office of firearm safety and violence prevention.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Law & Justice (originally sponsored by Senators Dhingra, Pedersen, Frockt, Carlyle, Wilson, C., Kuderer, Das, Hunt, Lovelett, Nguyen and Saldaña).

#### Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Creates the Washington Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention within the Department of Commerce to coordinate and promote state and local efforts to reduce firearm violence.

**Hearing Date:** 2/26/20

**Staff:** Ingrid Lewis (786-7289).

#### Background:

Public health science involves preventing illness, injury, and the spread of disease at a population or community level. From 1992 to 1996, the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) National Center for Injury Prevention and Control funded public health research investigating how to reduce deaths and injuries resulting from gun violence. In 1996, Congress enacted a budget proviso which barred the CDC from using funds "to advocate or promote gun control." The CDC interpreted this provision as a prohibition of the funding of research into gun violence. The CDC continued to collect data reported by states through the National Violent Death Reporting System and data for unintentional firearm injury deaths. Researchers identified limits on national-level data collection and data access as an impediment to their research. In 2018, Congress clarified that the ban on federal dollars for advocacy or the promotion of gun control did not extend to a ban on research.

Gun violence research programs at the state level have continued to integrate public health methods into their research to support evidence-based policy efforts to reduce gun violence.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

In Washington, legislation was enacted in 2016 creating a Safe Homes Task Force (Task Force) administered by the University of Washington. The goal of the Task Force was to develop suicide awareness and intervention strategies, with a focus on suicide by firearm and prescription medication.

### **Summary of Bill:**

The Washington Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention (Office) is created within the Department of Commerce to coordinate and promote state and local efforts to reduce firearm violence.

#### Duties of the Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention.

Duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

- working with law enforcement agencies, county prosecutors, researchers, and public health agencies to identify and improve upon available data sources, data collection methods, and data sharing mechanisms, including identifying gaps in available data needed for ongoing analysis, policy development, and implementation of evidence-based firearm violence intervention and prevention strategies;
- researching, identifying, and recommending legislative policy options to promote the implementation of statewide evidence-based firearm violence intervention and prevention strategies;
- researching, identifying, and applying for nonstate funding to aid in the research, analysis, and implementation of statewide firearm violence intervention and prevention strategies;
- working with the Office of Crime Victim Advocacy to identify opportunities to better support victims of firearm violence;
- contracting for a statewide helpline, counseling, and referral services for persons impacted by firearm violence;
- contracting with the University of Washington to develop a best practice guide for therapy for gun violence victims; and
- administering the Washington Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention Grant Program.

Beginning December 1, 2021, and continuing every odd-numbered year, the Office must report progress, findings, and recommendations for legislative policy options to the appropriate legislative committees.

#### Statewide Helpline, Counseling, and Referral Service.

Subject to the amount appropriated, the Office shall contract with a level one trauma center in the state to provide a statewide helpline, counseling, and referral service for persons impacted by gun violence. The service must be developed in consultation with the Office of Crime Victim Advocacy; include brief clinical encounters, problem solving, and referral to statewide resources; and establish relationships with providers trained in evidence-based trauma therapy.

#### Best Practice Guide.

The Office shall contract with the University of Washington Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health Sciences, in collaboration with the Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress, to develop a best practice guide for therapy for gun violence victims. The

guide must be made publicly available online and disseminated to appropriate entities across the state.

**Grant Program.**

The Office will administer the Washington Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention Grant Program (Program) to support firearm violence reduction initiatives in communities disproportionately impacted by firearm violence and suicides. Grants must be used to support, expand, and replicate evidence-based violence reduction initiatives primarily focused on intervention services to high risk populations. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis to cities that are disproportionately impacted by violence, and to law enforcement agencies and community-based organizations that serve those cities. Two or more cities may apply jointly when appropriate.

*Proposals.* Grant proposals must include clearly defined and measurable objectives; a description of the proposed use of the grant to implement the initiative; a description of how the grant will enhance coordination of existing services to reduce the duplication of services; and evidence indicating that the proposed initiative would likely reduce the incidence of firearm violence. Proposals that demonstrate the greatest likelihood of reducing firearm violence without contributing to mass incarceration will receive preference.

*Selection.* Grant recipients are selected by a grant selection advisory committee created by the Office. The advisory committee includes persons impacted by violence, formerly incarcerated persons, and persons with direct experience in implementing evidence-based violence reduction initiatives.

*Distribution of Funds.* A city that is awarded a grant must distribute no less than 50 percent of the grant funds to one or more of the following:

- community-based organizations; and
- public agencies or departments primarily dedicated to community safety or firearm violence prevention.

*Reports.* Grant recipients must report progress in achieving grant objectives in the time and manner required by the Office.

The Office is authorized to contract with an independent entity to evaluate the effectiveness of the Program.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available for Substitute Senate Bill 6288.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.