

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1485

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections, March 15, 2019

Title: An act relating to the appointment of religious coordinators.

Brief Description: Concerning the appointment of religious coordinators.

Sponsors: House Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations (originally sponsored by Representatives Lekanoff, Pettigrew, Shewmake, Gregerson, Entenman, Pellicciotti, Doglio, Appleton, Frame, Ormsby, Hudgins, Jinkins and Leavitt).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/01/19, 70-24.

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections: 3/11/19, 3/15/19 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Changes the employee title chaplain to religious coordinator for institutions under the Department of Corrections, Department of Children, Youth, and Families, and the Department of Social and Health Services.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Kuderer, Vice Chair; Zeiger, Ranking Member; Hasegawa and Takko.

Staff: Jarrett Sacks (786-7448)

Background: The Department of Corrections (DOC) appoints chaplains for its correctional institutions to meet the religious needs of inmates. Chaplains serve as religious program coordinators for all faith groups. Every chaplain must have qualifications consistent with community standards of the faith group to which the chaplain belongs.

Until July 1, 2019, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) appoints chaplains for its juvenile, custodial, and mental institutions. After July 1, 2019, the Department of

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Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) will appoint chaplains for juvenile correctional institutions, while DSHS will continue to appoint chaplains for its other institutions.

A minister or other clergyperson employed as a chaplain in a state institution or agency may receive, in addition to their gross salary, a housing allowance up to 40 percent of the person's gross salary as either of:

- the rental value of a home furnished to the person; or
- a housing allowance paid to the person as part of their compensation, in an amount equal to the rent or expense of the home.

Summary of Bill: The employee title chaplain, as used by DOC, DCYF, and DSHS, is changed to religious coordinator.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The term chaplain has a Christian connotation since other religions do not have chaplains, so it does not feel inclusive of non-Christians at the institutions. The chaplains do mostly administrative and coordination work, so the term religious coordinator fits better. Expanding the term will also allow for more diverse recruitment of individuals to serve as religious coordinators.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Debra Lekanoff, Prime Sponsor; Matthew Perry, Jewish Prisoner Services International; Gabe Galanda, Huy; Winona Stevens, Huy; Lauren Vignec, Pastor, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.