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**SENATE BILL 5662**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2022 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Kuderer, Trudeau, Hasegawa, Lovelett, Nguyen, Saldaña, Stanford, and C. Wilson; by request of Office of the Governor

AN ACT Relating to intergovernmental coordination to address transitioning persons encamped on state public rights-of-way to permanent housing solutions; adding a new section to chapter 43.20A RCW; adding a new section to chapter 43.185C RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature finds that many individuals experience homelessness as a result of a lack of available and affordable housing, increasing rents, insufficient income, complex and long-term behavioral health conditions, or disabilities, or as a result of domestic violence. Every night thousands of Washingtonians go to sleep in places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings, and spaces along the public rights-of-way. More than 1,750 unsanctioned encampments exist on public rights-of-way managed by state agencies. Public right-of-way encampments present increasing concerns for the health and safety of those encamped in this space, the public, and those workers who are responsible to maintain and improve public lands.

(2)(a) The legislature intends that persons experiencing homelessness be treated with dignity, care, and compassion. The legislature recognizes that the primary drivers of homelessness stem from a lack of investment in affordable housing, behavioral health, and other supports that provide economic stability.

(b) Furthermore, the legislature intends that local jurisdictions and providers engage persons experiencing homelessness with teams of multidisciplinary experts focused on trauma-informed care and provision of services with the goal of transitioning persons experiencing homelessness into permanent housing solutions. The legislature further intends that every effort must be made to avoid furthering existing trauma to persons experiencing homelessness by causing displacement that does not result in a transition to permanent housing. To that end, the legislature intends that a multidisciplinary team within state government be established to coordinate across state agencies, and collaborate with local governments, nonprofit organizations, and persons encamped on state rights-of-way to find housing solutions.

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

(1) There is created the office of intergovernmental coordination on public right-of-way homeless encampments within the department.

(2) Activities of the office must be carried out by a director and supervised by the secretary of the department or his or her designee.

(3) The office is responsible for leading efforts under this section to coordinate the spectrum of ongoing and future funding, policy, and practice efforts related to reducing the number of persons in unsanctioned encampments on state public rights-of-way. This includes coordination across state agencies, through local governments, and with persons in unsanctioned encampments on state public rights-of-way with the goal of reducing the number of encamped persons through transition to a permanent housing solution so that the encampment is closed with the site either restored to original conditions or preserved for future use.

(4) The office shall establish:

(a) Regional coordination teams charged with state agency, local government, and nonprofit organization collaboration on identifying or creating solutions that bring persons encamped on public rights-of-way into permanent housing to include traditional and nontraditional housing options. Collaboration partners will provide regional knowledge and support to address specific and unique regional needs. Collaboration partners may include the health care authority, the health benefit exchange, the department of health, the department of transportation, the department of ecology, the department of commerce, the department of veterans' affairs, tribal authorities, counties and cities, and private not-for-profit agencies;

(b) Regional outreach teams charged with outreach with the homeless population. Each team will include state, local, and private partners in addition to a core team from the department. Outreach teams are part of an intergovernmental team for initial assessment to identify and target individual needs, such as medical issues and treatment, mental health treatment, acquisition of medication, identification acquisition (such as birth certificates and social security cards), poly-substance abuse treatment, housing needs, need for immediate sheltering, need for social services (including supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits, women, infants, and children benefits, supplemental security income acquisition, medicaid, medicare, and social security benefits), and reengagement with family and relatives; and

(c) A data analysis team charged with data infrastructure development to create a performance monitoring infrastructure, establish a baseline, and then track outcomes for individuals experiencing homelessness in locales around encampments on public rights-of-way. The team shall also estimate the impact on client outcomes and services as well as estimate public program cost savings, where applicable. The data analysis team must provide a report to the governor and appropriate legislative committees by December 1, 2023, and annually thereafter.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.185C RCW to read as follows:

The department shall collaborate with the office of intergovernmental coordination on public right-of-way homeless encampments created in section 2 of this act on developing and implementing a statewide effort to reduce the number of persons encamped on the state public rights-of-way by transitioning to permanent housing solutions. The department shall use any funds appropriated by the legislature for this purpose to provide grants to local governments or nonprofit organizations to meet the individual needs of persons encamped on state public rights-of-way in order to facilitate their transition to permanent housing.

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