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**SENATE BILL 5052**

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**State of Washington**

**67th Legislature**

**2021 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Keiser, Randall, Cleveland, Conway, Das, Frockt, Hasegawa, Kuderer, Lovelett, Nguyen, Nobles, Robinson, Saldaña, Salomon, and Wilson, C.

Prefiled 12/31/20. Read first time 01/11/21. Referred to Committee on Health & Long Term Care.

1 AN ACT Relating to the creation of health equity zones; adding a  
2 new section to chapter 43.70 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** FINDINGS AND INTENT. (1) The legislature  
5 finds that people of color and immigrant populations experience  
6 significant health disparities compared to the general population,  
7 including more limited access to health care and poorer health  
8 outcomes. The legislature finds that these circumstances result in  
9 higher rates of morbidity and mortality for persons of color and  
10 immigrant populations than observed in the general population.

11 (2) Therefore, the legislature intends to create health equity  
12 zones to address significant health disparities identified by health  
13 outcome data. The state intends to work with community leaders within  
14 the health equity zones to share information and coordinate efforts  
15 with the goal of addressing the most urgent needs. Health equity zone  
16 partners shall develop, expand, and maintain positive relationships  
17 with communities of color and immigrant communities within the zone  
18 to develop effective and sustainable programs to address health  
19 inequity.

1        NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 2.**    A new section is added to chapter 43.70

2    RCW to read as follows:

3        (1)    The department, in coordination with the governor's  
4    interagency council on health disparities, local health  
5    jurisdictions, and accountable communities of health, must share and  
6    review population health data, which may be related to chronic and  
7    infectious diseases, maternal birth complications, preterm births and  
8    other newborn health complications, and any other relevant health  
9    data, to identify potential health equity zones in the state.

10       (2)    The department may limit the number of identified zones based  
11    on available resources but must develop a plan to expand the program  
12    statewide.

13       (3)    The department must notify relevant community organizations  
14    in the zones of the health equity zone designation and allow those  
15    organizations to identify projects to address the zone's most urgent  
16    needs related to health disparities. Community organizations may  
17    include, but are not limited to:

18        (a)    Community health clinics;

19        (b)    Local health providers;

20        (c)    Federally qualified health centers;

21        (d)    Health systems;

22        (e)    Local government;

23        (f)    Local health jurisdictions; and

24        (g)    Any other nonprofit organization working to address health  
25    disparities in the zone.

26       (4)    Organizations working within the zone may form a coalition to  
27    identify the needs of the zone, design projects to address those  
28    needs, and develop an action plan to implement the projects. Projects  
29    may include, but are not limited to:

30        (a)    Addressing health care provider access and health service  
31    delivery;

32        (b)    Improving community trust and information sharing; and

33        (c)    Conducting outreach and education efforts.

34        (5)    The department must provide:

35        (a)    Support to the coalitions in identifying and applying for  
36    resources to support projects within the zones; and

37        (b)    Technical assistance related to project management and  
38    developing health outcome and other measures to evaluate project  
39    success.

1           (6) By December 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, the department  
2 must submit a report to the legislature detailing the projects  
3 implemented in each zone and the outcome measures, including year-  
4 over-year health data, to demonstrate project success.

5           (7) For the purposes of this section "health equity zone" or  
6 "zone" means a contiguous geographic area that demonstrates  
7 measurable and documented health disparities and poor health  
8 outcomes, which may include but are not limited to high rates of  
9 maternal complications, newborn health complications, and chronic and  
10 infectious disease, is populated by communities of color or immigrant  
11 communities, and is small enough for targeted interventions to have a  
12 significant impact on health outcomes and health disparities.

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