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**HOUSE BILL 1543**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2023 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Dye, Kretz, Springer, Graham, Eslick, Mosbrucker, Chapman, Ryu, Wylie, Klicker, Couture, and Davis

AN ACT Relating to establishing a wild horse holding and training program at Coyote Ridge corrections center; and creating new sections.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature is committed to helping incarcerated persons successfully rejoin society after their release. In Washington, correctional industries is an important stepping stone for incarcerated persons to transition from a life behind bars to a free, law-abiding, and productive life in the community. These vocational and occupational programs are proven to promote rehabilitation and redemption, reduce recidivism, and improve public safety. The legislature intends to develop strategies for expanding these programs offered to incarcerated persons. To that end, correctional industries is hereby directed to evaluate the wild horse training and holding program in Arizona, which is conducted in partnership with Arizona correctional industries and the federal bureau of land management, for the purpose of implementing a similar program in Washington. Participants in the Arizona program have successfully and skillfully cared for and trained wild horses, which were then adopted or purchased by the public through the bureau of land management wild horse and burro program. Program participants use gentling techniques based in natural horsemanship and gain equestrian skills they can use when seeking employment or building businesses after being released. In the process, participants also build self-confidence and learn the value of patience, warmth, and respect for all living things. Early research indicates that participants in the Arizona program have significantly lower recidivism rates than the rest of the prison population, less than 15 percent as compared to 40 percent. The legislature recognizes the Arizona program as a potential model for developing a similar program at the Coyote Ridge correctional center.

Further, establishing a similar training and holding program would create an opportunity to address the statewide shortage of farriers resulting from the closure of the farrier program at Walla Walla Community College. A partnership between Walla Walla Community College and correctional industries would assist with meeting the demand for farrier services while also creating even more employment opportunities for persons leaving correctional institutions.

Therefore, the legislature hereby directs correctional industries to conduct a feasibility study and develop an implementation plan for the purpose of establishing a wild horse training, holding, and farrier program at Coyote Ridge corrections center.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The department of corrections, through correctional industries, shall conduct a feasibility study and develop a plan for implementing a wild horse training, holding, and farrier program at the Coyote Ridge corrections center. The program must be designed in partnership with the federal bureau of land management wild horse and burro program, for the purpose of assisting incarcerated persons with developing occupational, vocational, and life skills.

(2) In conducting the study and developing an implementation plan, the department shall consult with the bureau of land management wild horse and burro program, the state department of natural resources, the state department of agriculture, Walla Walla Community College, Washington State University, other appropriate state and federal agencies, local governments, and experts in the field of wild horse management and training. The department must:

(a) Ensure the plan will use natural horsemanship as a basis for gentling and training;

(b) Evaluate and consult with similar programs in other states, including reviewing existing agreements with the bureau of land management and studying operations and facilities used by those programs;

(c) Develop design and construction options for holding and training program facilities, which must include a consideration of: (i) The safety and welfare of incarcerated persons and staff; (ii) maintaining appropriate levels of security for a correctional institution; (iii) the welfare of the horses and the facilities necessary to support the proposed number of horses; and (iv) sourcing cost-effective materials, including repurposing materials from existing facilities;

(d) Determine the costs of establishing and maintaining operations, facilities, and staff for a holding program to feed, care for, and restore bureau of land management horses and burros as well as for a training program, which must consider: Utilizing correctional industries for constructing, maintaining, and operating facilities; financial support from the bureau of land management for holding the horses; and leveraging other available federal funding;

(e) Evaluate the availability of land necessary to support the program, which must include an evaluation of: (i) Current state property and adjacent private or public property available for lease or acquisition to be used for hay production, with the goal of promoting agricultural and farming skills through the holding and training program; (ii) current state property and adjacent private or public property available for lease or acquisition to be used for training facilities and holding facilities; and (iii) the water necessary and available for operations, including well water and surface water sourced from the region;

(f) Evaluate the steps necessary to develop a partnership with Walla Walla Community College for the purpose of establishing a course for qualifying participants to obtain a farrier certificate to be completed in conjunction with the wild horse training program. The course may also include a business basics class or component to assist participants with managing their farrier careers following their release;

(g) Consult with Washington State University to determine whether the college of veterinary medicine may have students practice care at the training and holding facilities; and

(h) Assess any changes to state statutes or department policies necessary to implement the program.

(3) The department shall complete the study and submit a report and implementation plan to the governor and appropriate committees of the legislature no later than November 1, 2023.

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