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**SENATE BILL 5773**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2024 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Torres, Braun, Dozier, Kuderer, Warnick, and J. Wilson

AN ACT Relating to public defense services; amending RCW 10.101.050 and 10.101.060; adding new sections to chapter 10.101 RCW; and repealing RCW 10.101.070 and 10.101.080.

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

**Sec.**  RCW 10.101.050 and 2005 c 157 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The Washington state office of public defense shall disburse appropriated funds to counties and cities for the purpose of improving the quality of public defense services. ((~~Counties may apply for up to their pro rata share as set forth in RCW 10.101.060 provided that counties conform to application procedures established by the office of public defense and improve the quality of services for both juveniles and adults. Cities may apply for moneys pursuant to the grant program set forth in RCW 10.101.080.~~))

(2) In order to receive appropriated funds under RCW 10.101.060, each ((~~applying~~)) county or city must ((~~require~~)):

(a) Require that attorneys providing public defense services attend training approved by the office of public defense at least once per calendar year((~~. Each applying county or city shall report~~));

(b) Report the expenditure for all public defense services in the previous calendar year, as well as case statistics for that year, including per attorney caseloads, and shall provide a copy of each current public defense contract to the office of public defense ((~~with its application. Each individual or organization that contracts to perform public defense services for a county or city shall report to the county or city~~));

(c) Provide documentation that attorneys providing public defense services are in compliance with the Washington supreme court standards for indigent defense; and

(d) Collect hours billed for nonpublic defense legal services in the previous calendar year, including number and types of private cases, from each individual or organization that contracts to perform public defense services.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 10.101 RCW to read as follows:

(1) All funds appropriated for the cost of public defense services in cities and counties as specified in RCW 10.101.050 must be appropriated in the following manner:

(a) Beginning in fiscal year 2024, the state shall appropriate funds for not less than 10 percent of the cost of public defense services;

(b) In fiscal year 2025, the state shall appropriate funds for not less than 20 percent of the cost of public defense services;

(c) In fiscal year 2026, the state shall appropriate funds for not less than 30 percent of the cost of public defense services;

(d) In fiscal year 2027, the state shall appropriate funds for not less than 40 percent of the cost of public defense services;

(e) In fiscal year 2028 and thereafter, the state shall appropriate funds for not less than 50 percent of the cost of public defense services.

(2)(a) The office of public defense shall determine the cost of public defense services annually, based on an average of the actual expenditures for public defense services reported by counties and cities for the previous two years.

(b) Counties and cities shall annually provide information on the actual expenditures for public defense services to the office of public defense.

**Sec.**  RCW 10.101.060 and 2005 c 157 s 4 are each amended to read as follows:

(1)((~~(a)~~)) Subject to the availability of funds appropriated for this purpose, the office of public defense shall disburse to ((~~applying~~)) all counties and cities that meet the requirements of ((~~RCW 10.101.050~~)) this chapter designated funds under this chapter on a pro rata basis pursuant to the formula set forth in ((~~RCW 10.101.070 and shall disburse to eligible cities, funds pursuant to RCW 10.101.080~~)) subsection (3) of this section. Each fiscal year for which it receives state ((~~funds~~)) reimbursement under this chapter, a county or city must document to the office of public defense that it is meeting the standards for provision of indigent defense services as endorsed by the Washington state bar association ((~~or that the funds received under this chapter have been used to make appreciable demonstrable improvements in the delivery of public defense services, including the following:~~

~~(i) Adoption by ordinance of a legal representation plan that addresses the factors in RCW 10.101.030. The plan must apply to any contract or agency providing indigent defense services for the county or city;~~

~~(ii) Requiring attorneys who provide public defense services to attend training under RCW 10.101.050;~~

~~(iii) Requiring attorneys who handle the most serious cases to meet specified qualifications as set forth in the Washington state bar association endorsed standards for public defense services or participate in at least one case consultation per case with office of public defense resource attorneys who are so qualified. The most serious cases include all cases of murder in the first or second degree, persistent offender cases, and class A felonies. This subsection (1)(a)(iii) does not apply to cities receiving funds under RCW 10.101.050 through 10.101.080;~~

~~(iv) Requiring contracts to address the subject of compensation for extraordinary cases;~~

~~(v) Identifying funding specifically for the purpose of paying experts (A) for which public defense attorneys may file ex parte motions, or (B) which should be specifically designated within a public defender agency budget;~~

~~(vi) Identifying funding specifically for the purpose of paying investigators (A) for which public defense attorneys may file ex parte motions, and (B) which should be specifically designated within a public defender agency budget.~~

~~(b) The cost of providing counsel in cases where there is a conflict of interest shall not be borne by the attorney or agency who has the conflict~~)).

(2) The office of public defense shall monitor trial level criminal public defense services to determine eligibility of counties and cities to receive state funds under this chapter. If a determination is made that a county or city receiving state funds under this chapter did not substantially comply with this section, the office of public defense shall notify the county or city of the failure to comply and unless the county or city contacts the office of public defense and substantially corrects the deficiencies within ((~~ninety~~)) 90 days after the date of notice, or some other mutually agreed period of time, the county's or city's eligibility to continue receiving funds under this chapter is terminated. If an applying county or city disagrees with the determination of the office of public defense as to the county's or city's eligibility, the county or city may file an appeal with the advisory committee of the office of public defense within ((~~thirty~~)) 30 days of the eligibility determination. The decision of the advisory committee is final.

(3)(a) The moneys under RCW 10.101.050 shall be distributed to each county and city determined to be eligible under this section by the office of public defense.

(b) The office of public defense shall establish policies for the distribution of appropriated funds to eligible counties and cities. Such policies shall prioritize counties with the largest trial level criminal public defense services backlogs and most vacancies of public defenders.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 10.101 RCW to read as follows:

The office of public defense shall:

(1) Examine and make recommendations to reduce trial level criminal public defense services caseloads and backlogs;

(2) Make recommendations to increase retention of experienced public defenders in high-need counties and cities; and

(3) Report findings and recommendations to the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the legislature not later than December 1, 2023.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The following acts or parts of acts are each repealed:

(1) RCW 10.101.070 (County moneys) and 2005 c 157 s 5; and

(2) RCW 10.101.080 (City moneys) and 2007 c 59 s 1 & 2005 c 157 s 6.

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