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**SENATE BILL 6155**

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

**By** Senator Wagoner

AN ACT Relating to establishing a statewide policy on camping on public property; adding a new section to chapter 9A.52 RCW; and prescribing penalties.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 9A.52 RCW to read as follows:

(1) No person may camp in or upon any public property unless specifically authorized by the public body with authority over the property.

(2) At all times, regardless of the availability of shelter, it is unlawful to camp on public property where such activity poses: (a) A substantial danger to any person; (b) an immediate threat or an unreasonable risk of harm to public health or safety; or (c) a disruption to vital government services.

(3) At all times, regardless of the availability of shelter space or beds, it is unlawful to camp or store personal property, including camp facilities and camp paraphernalia, or to have unauthorized encampments, at any time in the following locations: (a) Within three blocks of any congregate shelter provided that signs are posted prohibiting camping that are clearly visible to pedestrians; and (b) in public within 1,000 feet of the perimeter of the grounds of a park, a day care center or child care facility, as defined in RCW 35.63.170, or a public or private school, as defined in RCW 28A.150.010 and 28A.195.010.

(4) A violation of this section is a misdemeanor. Unless otherwise subject to custodial arrest on a warrant or probable cause for another crime, individuals subject to enforcement under this section shall be cited and released rather than being booked into jail. With the exception of those who do not meet the criteria for acceptance into a therapeutic court under chapter 2.30 RCW, individuals subject to enforcement under this section shall be referred to a therapeutic court by officer citation.

(5) Law enforcement officers shall not issue a criminal citation to enforce unauthorized camping under this section when an individual is on public property at a time when there is no available overnight shelter. Prior to issuing a citation to a homeless person who is sleeping, lying, sitting, or camping outdoors, the police officer must first confirm that a nearby 24/7 low-barrier shelter had available space during the previous 24 hours that could have been utilized by that individual. Confirmation of overnight shelter availability may come from data provided through an approved data system or through direct contact with a nearby low-barrier shelter, and shall consist of the following: (a) Whether a shelter has available space for sleeping; (b) the number of available spaces; and (c) the guests each shelter will accept (i.e., men, women, families with children, etc.).

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