
Housing Committee

HB 1899

Brief Description: Concerning the homelessness point-in-time count.

Sponsors: Representatives Zahn, Thomas, Parshley, Simmons, Cortes, Ormsby, Hill and Macri.

<p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Makes changes related to the Washington homeless census and homelessness Point-in-Time Count requirements.
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Hearing Date: 2/13/25

Staff: Audrey Vasek (786-7383).

Background:

Every year the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires communities across the nation to collect data on their homeless populations and to report the data to the HUD in order to receive federal funds to support regional efforts to end homelessness. The data collection process is referred to as the Point-in-Time (PIT) Count. The PIT Count is an estimate of both sheltered and unsheltered populations experiencing homelessness on one night in the last 10 calendar days of January or at such other time as required by the HUD.

The sheltered homelessness count includes people who are staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, or other temporary living arrangements on the night designated for the PIT Count. The unsheltered homelessness count includes people whose primary nighttime residence is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation on the night designated for the PIT Count, such as streets, cars, and parks.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The PIT Count is administered by Continuums of Care (CoCs), which are local planning bodies responsible for coordinating efforts to address homelessness in specific geographic areas. In Washington, there are six CoCs. Five of the CoCs represent major metropolitan areas including Clark, King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Spokane counties. The Balance of State CoC represents the rest of the state. The Department of Commerce (Commerce) leads data collection and reporting for all counties within the Balance of State CoC.

Under the HUD regulations, CoCs are required to plan and conduct, at least biennially, a PIT Count of persons experiencing homelessness within their geographic area. CoCs are also required to conduct a Housing Inventory Count (HIC) during the same time period as the PIT Count. The HIC is a point-in-time inventory of projects within a CoC that provide beds and units dedicated to serving persons who are homeless, such as emergency shelters, transitional housing, safe havens, and certain permanent housing.

Periodically, the HUD issues a notice (HUD Notice) that informs CoCs of the information that must be collected to successfully complete the HIC and PIT Count. For example, the 2024 HUD Notice, issued in November 2023, created additional requirements for the PIT Count, provided guidance on how to complete the HIC, described recent changes to the HIC and PIT Count requirements, and included simplified definitions of certain terms used for conducting the counts.

The PIT Count results are reported in the HUD Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR). The most recent AHAR was published in December 2024.

Under state law, Commerce is required to conduct an annual Washington homeless census for unsheltered persons that must be coordinated with already existing homeless census projects, including those funded by the HUD.

Summary of Bill:

The requirement that a Washington homeless census be conducted annually is removed. Instead, Commerce must conduct a Washington homeless census on a schedule created by Commerce and consistent with the HUD Notice. The census must make every effort to count persons experiencing homelessness as defined by the HUD Notice.

At minimum, the data collected must be consistent with the HUD Notice and the Washington Homeless Client Management Information System requirements.

Language related to certain tasks that Commerce was required to complete by the end of year four after the statute was originally enacted in 2005 is removed. The language removed includes the requirement that Commerce implement an online information and referral system to enable local governments and providers to identify available housing for a homeless person, work with local governments and their providers to develop a capacity for continuous case management to assist homeless persons, and implement an organizational quality management system.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 7, 2025.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.