

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5367

As of February 3, 2025

Title: An act relating to grant programs fostering community engagement through law enforcement-community partnerships and immersion.

Brief Description: Concerning grant programs fostering community engagement through law enforcement-community partnerships and immersion.

Sponsors: Senators Orwall, Conway and Hasegawa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 2/03/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Tasks the Department of Commerce to develop and administer a Community Immersion Law Enforcement Grant Program.
- Eliminates the sunset provision for the Community Engagement Grant Program.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Staff: Ryan Giannini (786-7285)

Background: Community Engagement Grant Program. The Department of Commerce (Commerce) maintains a grant program to foster community engagement through neighborhood organizing, law enforcement and community partnerships, youth mobilization, and business engagement.

The program must include funding for programs delivering services in a range of rural and urban counties across Washington.

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.

Commerce adopts policies and procedures to administer the project, including an application process, disbursement of grant funds to selected applicants, tracking compliance and proper use of funds, and measuring outcomes.

Program Eligibility. Applicants for the grant program must:

- be a public agency or nongovernmental agency;
- have demonstrated experience with community engagement initiatives that impact public safety;
- have community engagement;
- have established or be willing to establish a coordinated effort with committed partners, which must include law enforcement and organizations committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion of community members; and
- have established priorities, policies, and measurable goals in compliance with the requirements of the project.

A law enforcement agency applying for a grant award shall not be considered an eligible applicant unless there are no other eligible applicants from the community or county the law enforcement agency serves.

Grant Participants. Among other requirements, a successful participant must:

- build substantive law enforcement and community partnerships;
- mobilize youth to partner with neighborhood groups and law enforcement to prevent violence;
- engage businesses to help prevent crimes through safety training and other prevention initiatives; and
- collect and report data and information required by Commerce.

Expiration. The Community Engagement Grant Program expires on January 1, 2029.

Community Immersion Law Enforcement Program. In 2020, the Kent Police Department (KPD) launched the Community Immersion Law Enforcement Program (CILEP), the first program of its kind in the United States, to foster trust between police recruits and the community. CILEP was designed collaboratively with input from various stakeholders including local elected officials, members of the KPD, and local community members and nonprofit leaders. The program allows preacademy recruits to engage in community-focused work while awaiting entry to the Basic Law Enforcement Academy.

Summary of Bill: Community Engagement Grant Program. *Expiration.* The sunset provision for the Community Engagement Grant Program is eliminated.

Community Immersion Law Enforcement Program. Commerce shall develop and administer a Community Immersion Law Enforcement Grant Program.

In administering the program, Commerce must:

- award competitive grants to local law enforcement agencies using a grants review committee;
- require grant recipients to gather and report data in an evaluation process similar to the City of Kent's experience;
- require grant recipients to assign officers to the program a minimum of 45 days;
- prohibit grant recipients from providing a stipend or other financial arrangement to community-based organizations in excess of \$5,000 per participant;
- allow grant recipients to utilize grant funds to pay for overtime costs required to fill vacant patrol shifts while newly hired officers participate in the program;
- prioritize funding for the continuation of existing community immersion law enforcement programs; and
- limit Commerce's costs of administering the program to no more than 5 percent of amounts appropriated.

Appropriation: The bill contains a section or sections to limit implementation to the availability of amounts appropriated for that specific purpose.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 26, 2025.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Community trust in law enforcement is more important than ever especially in culturally rich communities. CILEP provides a platform for mutual education between the community and police officers through in-person experiential learning. The program helps build bonds with officers and the community. It is supported by law enforcement, community, and nonprofit organizations. Officers are being mentored in the community while also mentoring youth. Participants engage with community members through placement and participation in community organizations that, for example, aid vulnerable refugee families settling into their new environments. Through participation in the program, officers develop their compassion, patience, cultural competency, and empathy through their interactions with marginalized groups. Officers also develop critical communication and problem-solving skills. The program helps officers gain a greater awareness of the community they serve, reduce biases, and builds trust across language and cultural barriers.

OTHER: This program is an excellent idea, but there are some concerns with the language in the bill. New hires do not work patrol. So, use of grant awards to cover overtime is unwarranted. The grant review committee should have a law enforcement labor representative. Language prioritizing CILEP should be struck since it would create competition in funding between CILEP and existing community-law enforcement partnership programs. There should be a more collaborative approach in getting agreements between community groups and law enforcement. Community organizations that already

have a relationship with law enforcement and the community should be prioritized for officer placement.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Tina Orwall, Prime Sponsor; James McMahan, WA Assoc Sheriffs & Police Chiefs; Dana Ralph, Mayor, City of Kent; Rafael Padilla, Police Chief, City of Kent; Andy Grove, Assistant Police Chief, City of Kent; Janelle Hawes, UW Tacoma; Medard Ngueita, World Relief; Bervin Smith, Police Community Engagement Senior Manager, City of Tacoma Police Department.

OTHER: Teresa Taylor, (WACOPS) Washington Council of Police & Sheriffs; Priscilla Lisicich, self; Linda Thompson, Washington Association for Substance misuse and Violence Prevention (WASAVP).

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.