

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5393

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As of March 13, 2025

**Title:** An act relating to closing the Yakima Valley school and Rainier school.

**Brief Description:** Closing the Yakima Valley school and Rainier school.

**Sponsors:** Senators Robinson, Nobles and Wilson, C.; by request of Office of Financial Management.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Human Services: 2/10/25 [w/oRec-WM].  
Ways & Means: 3/13/25.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Closes Rainier School by June 30, 2027.
- Subject to appropriations, relocates Rainier School residents to other settings.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Staff:** Maria Hovde (786-7474)

**Background:** Rainier School. The Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) operates four Residential Habilitation Centers (RHCs), which provide 24-hour service and support for qualified individuals with developmental disabilities needing institutional care. The Rainier School, located in Buckley, is one of the RHCs.

Rainier School is an Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities Program certified by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). In 2018, Rainier School was

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providing service to approximately 300 residents and was comprised of three separately certified program areas: Program Area Team (PAT) A, PAT C, and PAT E. In 2019, PAT A lost its certification with CMS, and by 2020 residents were relocated and PAT A was closed. In 2023, PAT C lost its certification with CMS, and by 2024 residents were relocated and PAT C was closed. Today, PAT E is fully certified and is supporting 75 residents.

In 2020, at the direction of the Governor and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Klamath Cottage was opened on the Rainier School campus to transition individuals that were medically stable out of acute care hospital beds to ensure hospital capacity was available. Klamath Cottage is not an ICF, is currently serving nine residents, and is funded entirely with state resources through June 2025.

Community Residential Programs. Community residential programs provide support for persons living in community living situations. These include supported living and non-facility based living situations such as State-Operated Living Alternatives (SOLAs), which are operated by the DDA with state employees providing instruction and support to clients.

Adult Family Homes. Adult Family Homes are community-based facilities licensed to care for up to eight individuals. These homes provide room, board, laundry, necessary supervision, and assistance with activities of daily living, personal care, and social services.

**Summary of Bill:** The bill as referred to committee not considered.

**Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute):** Upon the effective date of the act, DSHS shall not permit any new admissions to Rainier School. By June 30, 2027, DSHS shall relocate current residents and Rainier School shall cease to operate as an RHC.

Subject to appropriations, DSHS shall, in accordance with client preferences, transition residents to SOLAs, supported living facilities, adult family homes, and other RHCs. DSHS shall offer RHC employees opportunities to work in SOLAs or other state facilities or programs.

This bill contains severability clauses.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on March 7, 2025.

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

**Effective Date:** The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony On Proposed Substitute:** PRO: The vast majority

of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) receive services in the community, including behavioral supports. These services are similar to what is provided in the RHC but cost less. Now is the time to close institutions. People deserve better and have the right to be in the community, which supports higher quality of life in the long run. We no longer believe in locking our loved ones with I/DD away. We want them living in the community where they have choices. People need to be with their families in the community and this is how you generate safety and well-being. Institutionalization causes trauma. Rainier School is dangerous and there have been instances of abuse and neglect. Significant portions have been shut down since 2019 due to repeated findings of abuse and neglect and the lack of adequate care and treatment. Closing Rainier School is fiscally responsible and aligned with best practices to discontinue outdated care. Our state is the last of the west coast states that does not have a plan to consolidate. Transferring this workforce into the community is very welcome and they can be accommodated at other RHCs.

CON: Many residents of Rainier School view it as their home and family. The idea that closing the school will save money simply is not true. We do not have the infrastructure in the state to deal with complex behavioral needs. The transition timeframes in the bill seem undoable and it is questionable whether there is sufficient capacity at other RHCs and whether there are sufficient SOLAs and supported living settings. Rainier School is a safety net for these individuals and helps to stabilize individuals who are in crisis in order to successfully transition them back to the community. Many of these individuals have come from jails, hospitals, and the streets because the community cannot support them. We cannot afford to squander the resources and capacity that Rainier School offers. Rainier School provides safe and comprehensive care that is not available in a one size fits all community setting. The commitment to care cannot be duplicated in a community setting and includes onsite medical and dental care among others. The staff are well trained to assist those with higher complex needs. Closing Rainier School would be devastating to the citizens that it serves and those who are waiting to receive services. The system must remain a full continuum of care because community providers cannot meet the needs of every individual. Any savings would be at the cost of displacing vulnerable individuals.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Shawn Latham, Self Advocates In Leadership; Kyle Matheson , Self Advocate ; Julie Clark, Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council; Robert Wardell, self advocate; Krista Milhofer, People First of Washington; Stacy Dym, The Arc of Washington State; Kieran Chojnowski, State Board President of People First of Washington and person with a disability; Christopher Strader, Region 3 Representative on the People First of Washington State Board; Tanika Aden, State Board Advisor for People First of Washington; Tracy Turner, Sail; Todd H Carlisle, Disability Rights Washington; Jennifer Maxwell; ARZU FOROUGH, Washington Autism Alliance; Michael Raymond, Former resident of Rainier School.

CON: Mike Yestramski; Terri Anderson, Action DD; Jeff Carter, Friends of Rainier; Mark Von Walter, Friends of Rainier; Sher Kirkpatrick; Brittney Barber, WFSE Member; Nicole Gomez, Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE)/Lobbyist; Bobbie Appleton.

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