
HOUSE BILL 2459

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2026 Regular Session

By Representatives Callan, Hall, and Zahn

Read first time 01/14/26. Referred to Committee on Local Government.

1 AN ACT Relating to allowing school districts more flexibility
2 when siting schools outside of an urban growth area; and amending RCW
3 36.70A.211 and 36.70A.213.

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

5 **Sec. 1.** RCW 36.70A.211 and 2017 c 129 s 2 are each amended to
6 read as follows:

7 (1) No countywide planning policy or multicounty planning policy
8 may prohibit the siting in a rural area of a school that serves
9 students from an urban area if the site of the new school is
10 contiguous to an existing school within the school district.

11 (2) A county may authorize the siting in a rural area of a school
12 that serves students from an urban area, even where otherwise
13 prohibited by a multicounty planning policy, under the following
14 circumstances:

15 (a) ~~((The county has a population of more than eight hundred~~
16 ~~forty thousand but fewer than one million five hundred thousand and~~
17 ~~abuts at least six other counties;~~

18 ~~(b))~~) The county must have adopted in its comprehensive plan a
19 policy concerning the siting of schools in rural areas;

1 ~~((e))~~ (b) Any impacts associated with the siting of such a
2 school are mitigated as required by the state environmental policy
3 act, chapter 43.21C RCW; and

4 ~~((d))~~ (c) The county must be a participant in a multicounty
5 planning policy as described in RCW 36.70A.210.

6 ~~((2))~~ (3) A multicounty planning policy in which any county
7 referenced in subsection ~~((1))~~ (2) of this section is a participant
8 must be amended, at its next regularly scheduled update, to include a
9 policy that addresses the siting of schools in rural areas of all
10 counties subject to the multicounty planning policy.

11 ~~((3))~~ (4) A school sited under this section may not ~~((collect~~
12 ~~or impose))~~ be included in the calculation of the impact fees
13 described in RCW 82.02.050.

14 ~~((4))~~ (5) This section expires June 30, 2031.

15 **Sec. 2.** RCW 36.70A.213 and 2017 3rd sp.s. c 32 s 1 are each
16 amended to read as follows:

17 (1) This chapter does not prohibit a county planning under RCW
18 36.70A.040 from authorizing the extension of public facilities and
19 utilities to serve a school sited in a rural area that serves
20 students from a rural area and an urban area, even where otherwise
21 prohibited by a multicounty planning policy, so long as the following
22 requirements are met:

23 (a) The applicable school district board of directors has adopted
24 a policy addressing school service area and facility needs and
25 educational program requirements;

26 (b) The applicable school district has made a finding, with the
27 concurrence of the county legislative authority and the legislative
28 authorities of any affected cities, that the district's proposed site
29 is suitable to site the school and any associated recreational
30 facilities that the district has determined cannot reasonably be
31 collocated on an existing school site, taking into consideration the
32 policy adopted in (a) of this subsection and the extent to which
33 vacant or developable land within the growth area meets those
34 requirements. If the school district's proposed site is contiguous to
35 the site of an existing school within the school district, the school
36 district's finding is conclusive;

37 (c) The county and any affected cities agree to the extension of
38 public facilities and utilities to serve the school sited in a rural
39 area that serves urban and rural students at the time of concurrence

1 in (b) of this subsection. If the school district's proposed site is
2 contiguous to the site of an existing school within the school
3 district, the county or cities may not refuse to extend public
4 facilities and utilities to the new site;

5 (d) If the public facility or utility is extended beyond the
6 urban growth area to serve a school, the public facility or utility
7 must serve only the school and the costs of such extension must be
8 borne by the applicable school district based on a reasonable nexus
9 to the impacts of the school, except as provided in subsection (3) of
10 this section; and

11 (e) Any impacts associated with the siting of the school are
12 mitigated as required by the state environmental policy act, chapter
13 43.21C RCW.

14 (2) This chapter does not prohibit (~~either~~) the expansion or
15 modernization of an existing school in the rural area (~~or~~), the
16 placement of portable classrooms at an existing school in the rural
17 area, or the siting of a new school that will serve students from an
18 urban area on school district property in the rural area when the new
19 school will be contiguous with an existing school within the school
20 district in the rural area.

21 (3) Where a public facility or utility has been extended beyond
22 the urban growth area to serve a school, the public facility or
23 utility may, where consistent with RCW 36.70A.110(4), serve a
24 property or properties in addition to the school if the property
25 owner so requests, provided that the county and any affected cities
26 agree with the request and provided that the property is located no
27 further from the public facility or utility than the distance that,
28 if the property were within the urban growth area, the property would
29 be required to connect to the public facility or utility. In such an
30 instance, the school district may, for a period not to exceed
31 (~~twenty~~) 20 years, require reimbursement from a requesting property
32 owner for a proportional share of the construction costs incurred by
33 the school district for the extension of the public facility or
34 utility.

35 (~~((4) By December 1, 2023, the department shall report to the~~
36 ~~governor and the appropriate committees of the legislature about~~
37 ~~schools outside of urban growth areas that have been built, are under~~
38 ~~construction, or are planned as a result of the requirements of~~
39 ~~chapter 32, Laws of 2017 3rd sp. sess. The report shall include the~~
40 ~~number, location, and characteristics of the schools; the number of~~

1 ~~urban and rural students served; and a cost analysis of schools built~~
2 ~~outside of urban growth boundaries.))~~

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