

---

**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5990**

---

**State of Washington**

**69th Legislature**

**2026 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senator Muzzall)

READ FIRST TIME 02/02/26.

1       AN ACT Relating to expanding the qualifications of those who may  
2       serve as a local health officer in rural counties; amending RCW  
3       70.05.080 and 70.05.080; providing an effective date; and providing  
4       an expiration date.

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

6       **Sec. 1.** RCW 70.05.080 and 1993 c 492 s 240 are each amended to  
7       read as follows:

8       (1) If the local board of health or other official responsible  
9       for appointing a local health officer under RCW 70.05.050 refuses or  
10       neglects to appoint a local health officer after a vacancy exists,  
11       the secretary of health may appoint a local health officer and fix  
12       the compensation. The local health officer so appointed shall have  
13       the same duties, powers and authority as though appointed under RCW  
14       70.05.050. Such local health officer shall serve until a qualified  
15       individual is appointed according to the procedures set forth in RCW  
16       70.05.050.

17       (2) The board or official responsible for appointing the local  
18       health officer under RCW 70.05.050 shall also be authorized to  
19       appoint an acting health officer to serve whenever the health officer  
20       is absent or incapacitated and unable to fulfill his or her

1 responsibilities under the provisions of chapters 70.05 and 70.46  
2 RCW.

3 (3) In counties with a population of less than 100,000, the board  
4 or official responsible for appointing the local health officer under  
5 RCW 70.05.050 may appoint a person licensed to practice as an  
6 advanced registered nurse practitioner under chapter 18.79 RCW or as  
7 a physician assistant under chapter 18.71A RCW to serve as an acting  
8 local health officer. The acting local health officer so appointed  
9 shall have the same duties, powers, and authority as though appointed  
10 under RCW 70.05.050. Such acting local health officer shall serve  
11 until a qualified individual is appointed according to the procedures  
12 set forth in RCW 70.05.050.

13 **Sec. 2.** RCW 70.05.080 and 1993 c 492 s 240 are each amended to  
14 read as follows:

15 (1) If the local board of health or other official responsible  
16 for appointing a local health officer under RCW 70.05.050 refuses or  
17 neglects to appoint a local health officer after a vacancy exists,  
18 the secretary of health may appoint a local health officer and fix  
19 the compensation. The local health officer so appointed shall have  
20 the same duties, powers and authority as though appointed under RCW  
21 70.05.050. Such local health officer shall serve until a qualified  
22 individual is appointed according to the procedures set forth in RCW  
23 70.05.050.

24 (2) The board or official responsible for appointing the local  
25 health officer under RCW 70.05.050 shall also be authorized to  
26 appoint an acting health officer to serve whenever the health officer  
27 is absent or incapacitated and unable to fulfill his or her  
28 responsibilities under the provisions of chapters 70.05 and 70.46  
29 RCW.

30 (3) In counties with a population of less than 100,000, the board  
31 or official responsible for appointing the local health officer under  
32 RCW 70.05.050 may appoint a person licensed to practice as an  
33 advanced practice registered nurse under chapter 18.79 RCW or as a  
34 physician assistant under chapter 18.71A RCW to serve as an acting  
35 local health officer. The acting local health officer so appointed  
36 shall have the same duties, powers, and authority as though appointed  
37 under RCW 70.05.050. Such acting local health officer shall serve  
38 until a qualified individual is appointed according to the procedures  
39 set forth in RCW 70.05.050.

1        NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 3.**    Section 1 of this act expires June 30,  
2    2027.

3        NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 4.**    Section 2 of this act takes effect June  
4    30, 2027.

--- **END** ---