
HOUSE BILL 1461

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2023 Regular Session

By Representatives Maycumber, Riccelli, Volz, Ormsby, and Corry

1 AN ACT Relating to a pilot project for providing basic law
2 enforcement training in eastern Washington; adding a new section to
3 chapter 43.101 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an
4 expiration date.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that Washington is
7 experiencing a crisis in public safety. Recent research suggests that
8 Washington has the lowest ratio of law enforcement officers to
9 residents compared to any other state in the nation. Recruitment and
10 hiring of new officers has become increasingly challenging, due in
11 part to excessive delays in accessing the state's basic law
12 enforcement academy. After an agency hires a new officer, he or she
13 waits many months for an opening at the academy. Even though a new
14 hire cannot be deployed in the field, agencies must pay his or her
15 salary to prevent him or her from seeking employment elsewhere. Law
16 enforcement agencies struggle with shouldering the costs of these
17 wait times, while also attempting to compete with one another for
18 qualified candidates. Agencies in eastern Washington have been
19 especially impacted because of the logistical and financial burden of
20 sending new hires across the state to participate in the basic law
21 enforcement academy.

1 The legislature recognizes the critical role of law enforcement
2 to functional government, and now more than ever, there is an urgent
3 need for officers with the expertise to respond to mental health
4 crises in the field. To ensure safe interactions between officers and
5 those in crisis, the state should incentivize qualified professionals
6 to seek careers in law enforcement, while also providing timely,
7 accessible, comprehensive, and evidence-based training.

8 Therefore, the legislature hereby directs the criminal justice
9 training commission to conduct a pilot project to host classes of the
10 basic law enforcement academy in eastern Washington. The pilot
11 project will not only provide additional necessary classes, but it
12 will also improve access and support to agencies in eastern
13 Washington. The legislature intends for the pilot project to use
14 innovative, needs-based approaches for training the next generation
15 of officers who will serve communities in eastern Washington.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 43.101
17 RCW to read as follows:

18 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
19 specific purpose, the commission shall conduct a pilot project for
20 providing the basic law enforcement academy program in eastern
21 Washington. The pilot project must:

22 (a) Be conducted from July 1, 2023, through July 1, 2026, with at
23 least three classes offered each fiscal year, each of which must
24 include at least 30 students for the purpose of meeting statewide
25 demand for trained law enforcement officers;

26 (b) Be located east of the crest of the Cascade mountains in a
27 county with a population of at least 400,000;

28 (c) Admit students exclusively from law enforcement agencies
29 serving, in whole or in part, a jurisdiction or jurisdictions east of
30 the crest of the Cascade mountains;

31 (d) Meet all of the requirements of this chapter, except the
32 commission may modify or suspend regulatory requirements and other
33 policies to explore innovative approaches to law enforcement
34 training;

35 (e) Consider incorporating mental health and de-escalation
36 training based on national best practices established by the
37 commission on accreditation for law enforcement agencies and other
38 appropriate organizations; and

1 (f) Use locally based trainers and local law enforcement
2 facilities when appropriate.

3 (2) The commission shall submit an initial report by November 1,
4 2024, and a final report by November 1, 2026, to the appropriate
5 committees of the legislature and the governor. The report must
6 include, at a minimum: A summary of the classes, including
7 participating agencies and number of trainees; the benefits and costs
8 of conducting the training in eastern Washington, which must also
9 include cost savings to local agencies; and any other findings and
10 recommendations, which may include, if appropriate, a proposal for a
11 permanent expansion of the academy to eastern Washington.

12 (3) This section expires July 1, 2027.

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