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**SENATE BILL 5292**

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**State of Washington**

**67th Legislature**

**2021 Regular Session**

**By** Senator Nobles

1 AN ACT Relating to the use of parks and recreation spaces,  
2 trails, and facilities in the design of parks Rx pilot program  
3 collaboratively designed with the health care and insurance industry  
4 sectors; creating new sections; and providing an expiration date.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that one of the  
7 best and most cost-effective ways for the residents of Washington  
8 state to achieve physical and mental health, and to prevent costly  
9 diseases and conditions such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and  
10 other coronary conditions is to get regular exercise and physical  
11 activity. In fact, as part of a study done for the recreation and  
12 conservation office on the benefits of trail-based activities, the  
13 University of Washington conducted a literature review of over 100  
14 studies that identify evidence of a close linkage between health  
15 benefits and being outdoors. The literature review further found that  
16 the health benefits of nature "may be particularly impactful for the  
17 12.2 percent who have incomes below the poverty level."

18 (2) The legislature further finds that for all residents, public  
19 parks and trails, recreation programs, and open spaces offer  
20 equitable, no-cost, or low-cost options for all people to be active

1 and healthy, with these spaces receiving record levels of use during  
2 the COVID-19 pandemic.

3 (3) The legislature finds that it can harness the equitable and  
4 low-cost or no-cost opportunities provided by parks and recreation  
5 spaces, and build upon successful programs established in areas such  
6 as the East Bay of California and the state of Tennessee, by  
7 establishing a pilot program in Washington state through which parks  
8 and recreation officials, health care providers, public and community  
9 health advocates, and insurance company representatives can work  
10 collaboratively to design a program that will incentivize residents,  
11 particularly those from communities experiencing inequities or  
12 without ready access to physical fitness facilities, to regularly use  
13 public parks and recreation sites, facilities and programs to enable  
14 better physical and mental health outcomes, decrease visits to  
15 hospitals and clinics, and lower overall insurance costs.

16 (4) It is the legislature's intent to establish a task force to  
17 work on designing a pilot program that can be implemented in the  
18 Puget Sound area, in eastern Washington, and in southwest Washington.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) Subject to the availability of amounts  
20 appropriated for this specific purpose and not to exceed \$100,000,  
21 the secretary of health shall convene a task force by August 1, 2021,  
22 to assist with the development of a "parks Rx" health and wellness  
23 pilot program that can be implemented in the Puget Sound, eastern  
24 Washington, and southwest Washington regions of Washington state. The  
25 members of the task force must include:

- 26 (a) The secretary of health, or the secretary's designee;  
27 (b) Two representatives from each of the following groups, to be  
28 appointed by the secretary of health:  
29 (i) Two representatives of local parks and recreation agencies,  
30 from recommendations by the Washington recreation and park  
31 association;  
32 (ii) Two representatives of health care providers and community  
33 health workers, from recommendations by the association of Washington  
34 healthcare plans;  
35 (iii) Two representatives from hospital and health systems, from  
36 recommendations by the Washington state hospital association; and  
37 (iv) Two representatives of local public health agencies, from  
38 recommendations by the Washington state association of local public  
39 health officials; and

1 (c) A representative from the northwest center for public health  
2 practice, to be appointed by the secretary of health.

3 (2) The secretary of health or the secretary's designee must  
4 chair the task force created in subsection (1) of this section. Staff  
5 support for the task force must be provided by the department of  
6 health.

7 (3) The task force must meet at least once monthly through  
8 November 2021.

9 (4) The duties of the task force are to advise the department of  
10 health on issues including, but not limited to, developing:

11 (a) A process to establish a pilot program described in  
12 subsection (1) of this section around the state with a focused  
13 emphasis on diverse communities and where systematic inequities and  
14 discrimination have negatively affected health outcomes;

15 (b) Model agreements that would enable insurers to offer  
16 incentives to public, nonprofit, and private employers to create  
17 wellness programs that offer employees a discount on health insurance  
18 in exchange for a certain usage level of outdoor parks and trails for  
19 recreation and physical activity; and

20 (c) Recommendations on ways in which a public-private partnership  
21 approach may be utilized to fund the implementation of the pilot  
22 program described in subsection (1) of this section.

23 (5) The members of the task force are encouraged to consider  
24 grant funding and outside funding options that can be used toward the  
25 pilot program.

26 (6) The department of health must report findings and  
27 recommendations of the task force to the governor and relevant  
28 committees of the legislature in compliance with RCW 43.01.036 by  
29 December 1, 2021.

30 (7) Participation on the task force created in subsection (1) of  
31 this section is strictly voluntary and without compensation.

32 (8) This section expires December 31, 2021.

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