
HOUSE BILL 1270

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2023 Regular Session

By Representatives Dye and Walen

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing the Washington state commission
2 on boys and men; and adding a new chapter to Title 43 RCW.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds it necessary to
5 establish a Washington state commission on boys and men tasked with
6 addressing the well-being of Washington's boys, male youth, and men.
7 Data disaggregated by sex or gender show that Washington's male
8 population experience a breadth of disparities in key indicators of
9 well-being, including educational achievement, suicide, homelessness,
10 drug and alcohol addiction and overdose, and incarceration.

11 In the 2022 point-in-time count for Washington, 63 percent of
12 individuals experiencing homelessness were male. Of the people
13 experiencing unsheltered homelessness, 70 percent were male. The
14 legislature finds that dismantling barriers and challenges, such as
15 drug use, that lead to homelessness among male youth and men is
16 crucial in helping them obtain and maintain health and economic
17 security.

18 Substance abuse is a key driver of unemployment, homelessness,
19 and poor health. The national institute on drug abuse found that men
20 are more likely than women to use almost all types of illicit drugs,
21 and illicit drug use is more likely to result in emergency room

1 visits or overdose deaths for men. The Washington state department of
2 health found that, between 2018 and 2021, 67 percent of the 6,434
3 people who died from a drug overdose were male. The national center
4 for drug abuse statistics reports that 66 percent of the 10,507
5 people who died from excessive alcohol use in Washington between 2017
6 and 2021 were male. The legislature finds that addiction is a
7 precursor to incarceration and that a commission tasked with
8 examining risk factors that lead to drug use among males and
9 strategies for drug prevention is crucial to reduce drug addictions
10 and break the cycle of incarceration for this population.

11 The legislature finds that gender-based disparities are seen in
12 the criminal justice system. The Washington state department of
13 children, youth, and families states that, between 2019 and 2021,
14 males were 91 percent of the individuals who spent time in a juvenile
15 rehabilitation facility. Their average length of stay, 361 days, was
16 145 days longer than the average length of stay for female youth.
17 Data reported by the Washington association of sheriffs and police
18 chiefs showed that in 2021 men accounted for 88 percent of people in
19 Washington's county, regional, city, and tribal jails. In addition, a
20 2021 report stated that 94 percent of people confined in the
21 department of corrections facilities in Washington were male.

22 The legislature finds that a variety of risk factors and exposure
23 to neglect and maltreatment experienced by boys and male youth
24 contribute to an increased risk of their incarceration. A 2016
25 systematic review of 62 prospective and longitudinal studies that
26 looked at the association between exposure to maltreatment during
27 childhood or adolescence and subsequent delinquent behavior found
28 that, for males, and only in part for females, maltreatment gives
29 rise to other risk factors that are then associated with criminal
30 offending. A 2008 study included in the systematic review found that
31 neglect emerged as a strong predictor for a range of different types
32 of criminal offenses, and neglect was more influential in the pathway
33 to delinquency for males. The legislature finds that it is imperative
34 to establish a commission tasked with examining risk factors commonly
35 experienced by boys, male youth, and men and to use the information
36 to inform policies and practices, eliminate risk factors, improve
37 outcomes for victims of maltreatment and neglect, and reduce
38 incarceration rates for males.

39 In addition to being incarcerated at higher rates, the Washington
40 association of sheriffs and police chiefs found that in 2021 males

1 were the majority of victims of violent crimes and accounted for 74
2 percent of homicide victims in the state. In addition, as of December
3 2022, 56 percent of Washington's 2,354 missing persons were male,
4 according to the Washington state patrol. Nearly half of missing
5 indigenous persons are men or male youth. A report issued in 2022 by
6 Washington's missing and murdered indigenous women and people task
7 force included a recommendation to focus more attention on violence
8 that indigenous males experience.

9 There are wide gender gaps at all levels of education, with boys
10 and men trailing girls and women. In 2019, the office of the
11 superintendent of public instruction reported that male youth in
12 Washington dropped out of high school at higher rates than female
13 youth. It also found that boys and male youth are suspended or
14 expelled at higher rates than girls and female youth, which results
15 in more disruptions in their education and increases their risk of
16 falling behind. A commission on boys and men tasked with examining
17 gender-based learning needs and educating policymakers about
18 educational tools and solutions tailored to address the specific
19 needs of boys and male youth is necessary to close the achievement
20 gap in the Washington education system.

21 The legislature also finds that children in prekindergarten
22 through fifth grade benefit from gender diversity among the teaching
23 staff at their schools. A 2018 evaluation of student survey data
24 showed that students who were assigned to teachers of the same gender
25 reported positive benefits in the areas of personal effort, happiness
26 in class, feeling cared for and motivated by their teacher, quality
27 of student-teacher communication, and college aspirations. During the
28 2021-22 academic year, men were fewer than one out of every five
29 teachers of prekindergarten through fifth grade in Washington's
30 public schools.

31 The legislature finds that a gender-based disparity exists in the
32 rates of suicide. Males accounted for 77 percent of suicide deaths in
33 Washington from 2010-2019 according to the Washington state
34 department of health. Males are the majority of suicide deaths in all
35 age groups ranging from between 10 and 14 years old to 85 years and
36 older. The legislature finds that services such as mental health
37 counseling can be effective early intervention strategies for mental
38 health care. In Washington, there are three female licensed mental
39 health counselors for every one male licensed mental health
40 counselor. The legislature finds that a commission on boys and men is

1 necessary to examine the causes for the high suicide rate among males
2 and assess best practices and solutions for reducing suicides by
3 males.

4 Besides teaching and mental health care, the legislature finds
5 that men are underrepresented in certain other professions of public
6 importance. Social workers play a critical role in connecting people
7 to government programs and services. Only 16 percent of Washington's
8 licensed social workers are men. The department of health reported
9 that of the estimated 62,394 registered nurses in Washington in 2019,
10 only 12 percent were male.

11 The legislature finds that it is important to establish a
12 commission on boys and men tasked with developing strategies to
13 encourage men and male youth to consider careers in teaching, mental
14 health care, social work, nursing, and other professions where the
15 workforce severely lacks male participation.

16 The legislature also finds that improvements are needed around
17 parenting equity and father engagement. In 2015, the fatherhood
18 project cited numerous studies that found that people with actively
19 involved father figures during childhood not only experience
20 beneficial outcomes in childhood, such as greater academic success,
21 positive social behavior, and reduced contact with the juvenile
22 justice system, but they also are more successful in their careers
23 and marriages and are better able to handle stress as an adult. The
24 legislature finds that a commission on boys and men tasked with
25 examining obstacles that prevent a father's involvement in his
26 children's lives and advocating for policies that reduce the chances
27 that a father will be absent in his children's lives is necessary for
28 achieving better short-term and long-term outcomes for all Washington
29 youth. The legislature intends for the commission on boys and men to
30 cooperate with the Washington fatherhood council and other entities
31 striving to improve outcomes for children through greater involvement
32 of fathers.

33 The legislature intends to create a Washington state commission
34 on boys and men to serve as a focal point in state government to
35 better identify and measure factors impacting the well-being of boys,
36 male youth, and men. The legislature intends to promote a
37 collaborative effort between the commission on boys and men, women's
38 commission, LGBTQ commission, human rights commission, and other
39 commissions to achieve equal opportunity for all Washington
40 residents.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) The Washington state commission on
2 boys and men is established. In carrying out its duties under this
3 chapter, the commission may only focus its efforts on the following
4 five areas: Education; jobs, careers, and financial health;
5 fatherhood, family, and relationships; physical and mental health;
6 and the experiences of males in the criminal justice system and other
7 court systems.

8 (2) The commission must be administered by an executive director
9 who must be appointed by, and serve at the pleasure of, the governor.
10 The executive director shall have demonstrated work in, and an
11 understanding of, at least one of the five focus areas described
12 under subsection (1) of this section as it applies to issues
13 impacting the well-being of boys, male youth, and men. The governor
14 shall set the salary of the executive director. The executive
15 director may employ staff for the commission as needed. The salaries
16 of the executive director and staff must be comparable to those of
17 similar positions in other state commissions.

18 (3) Pertaining to the five focus areas described in subsection
19 (1) of this section, the executive director of the commission shall:

20 (a) Monitor state legislation, and advocate for legislation which
21 may positively impact boys, male youth, and men;

22 (b) Work with state agencies to assess programs and policies that
23 tangibly and directly impact boys, male youth, and men and propose
24 solutions that may provide improved outcomes;

25 (c) Coordinate and collaborate with the women's commission, LGBTQ
26 commission, human rights commission, and other commissions to address
27 issues of mutual concern;

28 (d) Work as a liaison between the public and private sector to
29 improve the well-being of boys, male youth, and men;

30 (e) Maintain a list of eligible nominees for membership on the
31 commission who have demonstrated expertise and interest in issues
32 impacting boys, male youth, and men, and nominate such individuals
33 for consideration; and

34 (f) Hire staff, contract with a third-party consultant, or
35 collaborate with the office of equity to develop indices and metrics
36 to measure the well-being of Washington's male population.

37 (4) If the commission elects to collaborate with the office of
38 equity pursuant to subsection (3)(f) of this section, the office of
39 equity shall assist the commission upon request.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) The Washington state commission on
2 boys and men shall consist of nine nonlegislative voting members. The
3 speaker of the house of representatives and the minority leader of
4 the house of representatives shall each appoint two nonlegislative
5 members to the commission. The president of the senate and the
6 minority leader of the senate shall each appoint two nonlegislative
7 members to the commission. The governor shall appoint one
8 nonlegislative member to the commission, with the advice and consent
9 of the senate. In making such appointments, all appointing
10 authorities shall give due consideration to nominations submitted by
11 the executive director.

12 (2) The appointing authorities may only appoint members who have
13 demonstrated work in, and an understanding of, at least one of the
14 five focus areas described under section 2(1) of this act as it
15 applies to issues impacting the well-being of boys, male youth, and
16 men.

17 (3) At the commission's first meeting, each appointed voting
18 member shall draw lots to determine the length of time they will
19 serve on the commission. Of the persons initially appointed to the
20 commission, three members shall serve one year, three shall serve two
21 years, and three shall serve three years. Upon expiration of such
22 terms, subsequent appointments must be for three years. Any vacancies
23 occurring in the membership of the commission must be filled for the
24 remainder of the unexpired term in the same manner as the original
25 appointments. In no case may any voting member serve more than three
26 years without formal reappointment by the appropriate appointing
27 authority.

28 (4) Two members of the senate, one from each of the two major
29 political parties, appointed by the president of the senate, and two
30 members of the house of representatives, one from each of the two
31 major political parties, appointed by the speaker of the house of
32 representatives, shall serve as nonvoting members in an advisory
33 capacity. The appointing authorities shall appoint members who have
34 demonstrated an interest in furthering the purpose of the commission.
35 All legislative advisory members shall serve a two-year term and the
36 position of any legislative advisory member is vacated whenever such
37 member ceases to be a member of the house from which the member was
38 appointed.

1 (5) (a) Nonlegislative members of the commission must be
2 reimbursed for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties
3 in accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

4 (b) Legislative members of the commission must be reimbursed for
5 expenses incurred in the performance of their duties in accordance
6 with RCW 44.04.120.

7 (6) A simple majority of the commission's voting membership
8 constitutes a quorum for the purpose of conducting business.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) Within the five focus areas described
10 in section 2(1) of this act, the Washington state commission on boys
11 and men shall have the following duties:

12 (a) Provide a clearinghouse for information regarding state
13 legislation as it relates to the purpose of this chapter;

14 (b) Identify and define specific needs of boys, male youth, and
15 men and provide recommendations for addressing those needs in reports
16 to the legislature and governor under (c) of this subsection, and on
17 an ongoing basis;

18 (c) Submit a report to the appropriate committees of the
19 legislature and the governor every year, in compliance with RCW
20 43.01.036, detailing the commission's activities;

21 (d) Consult with state agencies regarding the effects of agency
22 policies, procedures, practices, laws, and administrative rules on
23 the unique problems and needs of boys, male youth, and men. The
24 commission shall also advise such state agencies on the development
25 and implementation of comprehensive and coordinated policies, plans,
26 and programs focusing on those problems and needs;

27 (e) Gather data and provide resource and referral information to
28 agencies and the public in order to implement the purposes of this
29 chapter;

30 (f) Hold public hearings to gather input on issues related to the
31 unique problems and needs of boys, male youth, and men; and

32 (g) Advocate for the removal of legal and social barriers for
33 boys, male youth, and men.

34 (2) To inform public policy, the commission may consult with
35 nonprofit organizations and faith-based organizations that specialize
36 in or provide services relating to one of the five focus areas
37 described in section 2(1) of this act.

1 (3) State agencies must provide assistance to the commission upon
2 request, including gathering and providing data and information, to
3 carry out the purposes of this chapter.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** (1) The Washington state commission on
5 boys and men may receive gifts, grants, and endowments from public or
6 private sources that are made for the use or benefit of the
7 commission and to expend them and any income derived from them
8 according to their terms and the purposes of this chapter. The
9 commission's executive director shall make a report of such funds
10 received from private sources to the office of financial management
11 on a semiannual basis. Funds received from private sources must not
12 be applied to reduce or substitute for the commission's budget as
13 appropriated by the legislature but must be applied and expended
14 toward projects and functions authorized by this chapter that were
15 not funded by the legislature.

16 (2) In carrying out its duties, the commission may enter into
17 agreements with public and private institutions, local governments,
18 private industry, community organizations, and other segments of the
19 general public as needed for the purposes of this chapter.

20 (3) The commission may adopt rules pursuant to chapter 34.05 RCW
21 as necessary to implement the purposes of this chapter.

22 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** Sections 1 through 5 of this act
23 constitute a new chapter in Title 43 RCW.

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