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HOUSE BILL 1831

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State of Washington

68th Legislature

2023 Regular Session

By Representatives Ramos and Entenman

1 AN ACT Relating to addressing the Washington state ferries'  
2 workforce shortages; adding a new section to chapter 47.60 RCW;  
3 adding a new section to chapter 28B.50 RCW; creating a new section;  
4 providing an effective date; and declaring an emergency.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** Washington's marine highways provide vital  
7 transportation links between communities. Citizens, businesses, and  
8 visitors depend on the state's ferry system to provide safe,  
9 dependable auto and passenger service to conduct daily life and  
10 commerce activities. The legislature finds that in October 2021, the  
11 ferry system adopted an alternative service plan to recognize the  
12 lack of availability of staff to meet the United States coast guard  
13 requirements for crewing vessels. Even with this plan, service  
14 reliability dropped below 95 percent, reflecting the continued  
15 struggle of the ferry system to meet crewing requirements. The  
16 legislature further finds that the recommendations of the joint  
17 transportation committee study on ferry workforce planning, completed  
18 in December 2022, provide a pathway for addressing workforce  
19 challenges, addressing recruitment, hiring, training, employee  
20 development, and succession planning. To be successful, this  
21 recommended pathway must integrate into every step of implementation

1 the need for new, equitable systems to achieve a workforce that is  
2 inclusive and representative of the diversity of Washington's labor  
3 force. The legislature intends to assist the Washington state ferries  
4 to meet its workforce challenges, providing resources for  
5 implementing employee recruitment, hiring, training, and retention  
6 initiatives.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 47.60  
8 RCW to read as follows:

9 For the purpose of increasing the capacity of human resources  
10 functions available to the Washington state ferries as it works to  
11 address its staffing shortage:

12 (1) The department shall contract out for the administration of  
13 human resources management for the Washington state ferries. To the  
14 extent practicable, all functions of human resources management for  
15 the Washington state ferries must be performed under the contract  
16 including, but not limited to, outreach and recruitment, hiring  
17 processes, applicant assistance, workforce planning, employee  
18 engagement, and employee retention.

19 (2) The Washington state ferries shall adopt a formal strategy to  
20 implement diversity, equity, and inclusion as an essential part of  
21 its implementation of the recommendations of the 2022 joint  
22 transportation committee study on ferry workforce planning. The  
23 consultant contract for human resources management required in this  
24 section must include a specific requirement to develop this strategy.

25 (3) The competitive procurement process must select and hire an  
26 independent, expert consultant with a background in the incorporation  
27 of diversity, equity, and inclusion principals in human resources  
28 management.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.50  
30 RCW to read as follows:

31 (1) The legislature finds that the maritime training academy at  
32 Seattle Central Community College is a United States coast guard  
33 approved training program that prepares the next generation of  
34 skilled mariners to fill vital roles in all sectors of the maritime  
35 industry, including Washington state ferries. Yet, despite the aging  
36 of the maritime workforce and dramatic rise in entry-level job  
37 openings in the maritime industry, enrollments remain low and the  
38 program is not achieving its full potential. The legislature also

1 finds that the increasing diversity of community and technical  
2 college students are a valuable resource for the maritime industry,  
3 which has not historically provided career opportunities to people  
4 from nonmaritime backgrounds, women, black, indigenous, or other  
5 people of color. The legislature intends to maximize the impact of  
6 this valuable training program by focusing its efforts on meeting the  
7 training needs of the Washington state ferries.

8 (2) Management and operation of the Seattle maritime training  
9 academy is assigned to the Washington state ferries division of the  
10 Washington state department of transportation to meet the workforce  
11 needs of the ferries division as well as the maritime industry  
12 generally. The director of the Seattle maritime training academy  
13 reports to the Washington state department of transportation  
14 assistant secretary for the Washington state ferries. The director  
15 shall manage the activities and logistics of operating the center,  
16 make policy and planning recommendations to the assistant secretary  
17 for the Washington state ferries, and implement decisions of the  
18 assistant secretary.

19 (3) Seattle Central Community College shall retain responsibility  
20 for infrastructure preservation and improvement for academy  
21 facilities.

22 (4) Seattle Central Community College and the Washington state  
23 ferries division must establish regular protocols for coordinating  
24 operations and maintenance of the training programs and facilities,  
25 long-range and strategic planning for training needs, and  
26 collaboration with the community served.

27 (5) (a) The Washington state ferries division of the Washington  
28 state department of transportation shall assume leadership of the  
29 Seattle maritime training academy upon completion and approval by the  
30 legislature of a joint plan created with Seattle Central Community  
31 College for the transfer of the management of operations of the  
32 academy that includes:

33 (i) Details of management structure and allocation of  
34 responsibilities;

35 (ii) A schedule of the transfer of management of the operation of  
36 the academy;

37 (iii) Assurances of the continued accreditation of the maritime  
38 training programs;

39 (iv) Strategies for increasing enrollments and optimizing the  
40 value of the academy's training programs for the Washington state

1 ferries division of the Washington state department of  
2 transportation;

3 (v) Strategies for increasing enrollments of people who have not  
4 traditionally been employed in the maritime sector;

5 (vi) A draft interagency agreement or other memorandum of  
6 understanding needed to implement the transfer of management of the  
7 operation of the maritime training academy; and

8 (vii) A multibiennium budget that addresses both operating  
9 expenses and distribution of tuition revenues required to effectively  
10 implement the joint plan.

11 (b) The joint plan must be completed by December 1, 2023, and  
12 submitted to the appropriate committees of the legislature for  
13 review. The plan shall be considered approved if specific  
14 appropriations are made in the 2024 supplemental transportation  
15 appropriations act for this specific purpose. The transfer of the  
16 responsibility for the management and operation of the Seattle  
17 maritime training academy to the Washington state ferries division of  
18 the Washington state department of transportation must occur by July  
19 1, 2024.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** This act is necessary for the immediate  
21 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of  
22 the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes  
23 effect July 1, 2023.

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