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HOUSE BILL 2453

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State of Washington

68th Legislature

2024 Regular Session

By Representatives Hutchins and Barkis

1 AN ACT Relating to creating a housing gap voucher program; adding  
2 a new section to chapter 43.31 RCW; adding a new section to chapter  
3 44.28 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an expiration date.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that the state  
6 of Washington is experiencing a significant increase in housing  
7 costs, particularly in rental markets. High rents have become a  
8 substantial burden for a substantial portion of the population,  
9 limiting their ability to access safe and affordable housing. This  
10 situation creates economic instability and negatively impacts the  
11 overall well-being of individuals and families across the state.

12 (2) The legislature further finds that a significant number of  
13 Washington residents are currently rent-burdened, spending a  
14 disproportionate amount of their income on housing expenses. The  
15 strain imposed by high rental costs contributes to financial  
16 insecurity, making it challenging for individuals and families to  
17 meet other essential needs, such as health care, education, and  
18 savings for the future. This phenomenon exacerbates existing  
19 inequalities and hinders economic mobility for a significant portion  
20 of the population.

1 (3) Therefore, the legislature intends to address the issue of  
2 housing affordability by establishing a rental voucher program. This  
3 program aims to reduce the number of people who are rent-burdened by  
4 providing financial assistance to eligible individuals and families.  
5 This program seeks to create a more equitable and accessible housing  
6 market, fostering stability and opportunity for Washington residents.  
7 By implementing this rental voucher program, the legislature aims to  
8 alleviate the economic strain caused by high rents, promote housing  
9 security, and enhance the overall quality of life for residents of  
10 the state.

11 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 43.31  
12 RCW to read as follows:

13 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this  
14 specific purpose, the housing gap voucher program is created as a  
15 grant program administered by the department of commerce. The  
16 department may adopt any rules necessary to administer the program.

17 (2) As part of the housing gap voucher program, the department of  
18 commerce may provide grants to public housing authorities created  
19 under chapter 35.82 RCW for the purpose of providing housing gap  
20 voucher payments for eligible renters as described in this section.

21 (3) To be eligible for housing gap voucher payments, a renter  
22 must meet all of the following criteria:

23 (a) The renter must have a household income at or below 80  
24 percent of the median household income adjusted for household size,  
25 for the county where the household is located, as reported by the  
26 United States department of housing and urban development;

27 (b) The renter must spend more than 30 percent of the renter's  
28 monthly household income on monthly housing costs, including rent,  
29 fees, and utilities; and

30 (c) The renter would not have to spend more than 30 percent of  
31 their monthly household income on monthly housing costs, including  
32 rent, fees, and utilities, if the renter's monthly rent payment was  
33 reduced by \$400 or less.

34 (4) A public housing authority must prioritize providing housing  
35 gap voucher payments for eligible renters who meet any of the  
36 following criteria:

37 (a) The eligible renter has a household income at or below 60  
38 percent of the median household income adjusted for household size,

1 for the county where the household is located, as reported by the  
2 United States department of housing and urban development; or

3 (b) The eligible renter receives supplemental security income.

4 (5) A housing gap voucher payment may not exceed the lesser of  
5 \$400 or the amount necessary to reduce an eligible renter's monthly  
6 housing costs, including rent, fees, and utilities, to no more than  
7 30 percent of the eligible renter's monthly household income.

8 (6) Only one eligible renter per household may receive housing  
9 gap voucher payments.

10 (7) An eligible renter may receive housing gap voucher payments  
11 for up to 24 months, regardless of whether the months are  
12 consecutive.

13 (8) (a) A renter seeking a housing gap voucher payment under this  
14 section must submit monthly documentation of their income, rent,  
15 utilities, and any other records necessary to determine program  
16 eligibility to the appropriate public housing authority.

17 (b) A renter who provides false documentation under this  
18 subsection must repay any housing gap voucher payments received and  
19 is no longer eligible for participation in the housing gap voucher  
20 program.

21 (9) A landlord may not discriminate against renters receiving  
22 housing gap voucher payments.

23 (10) By June 30, 2025, and annually thereafter, and in compliance  
24 with RCW 43.01.036, the department of commerce shall submit a report  
25 to the appropriate committees of the legislature on the housing gap  
26 voucher program that includes information on the total number of  
27 renter households served by the program, the total dollar amount of  
28 rental assistance distributed to renters as housing gap voucher  
29 payments, the average number of months that a renter household  
30 receives housing gap voucher payments, and any recommendations for  
31 changes to the program. The department of commerce must also post a  
32 copy of the report to the department's website.

33 (11) For the purposes of this section, "renter" means any person  
34 who rents a dwelling unit under a rental agreement subject to chapter  
35 59.18 RCW or a manufactured/mobile home lot under a rental agreement  
36 subject to chapter 59.20 RCW.

37 (12) This section expires June 30, 2031.

38 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 44.28  
39 RCW to read as follows:

1       The joint committee must review the efficacy of the housing gap  
2 voucher program established by this act and its impacts on housing  
3 stability for those served by the program and report its findings to  
4 the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 1, 2030.  
5 The review must include a recommendation on whether this program  
6 should be continued without change or should be amended or repealed.

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