
SENATE BILL 5052

State of Washington

67th Legislature

2021 Regular Session

By Senators Keiser and Randall

Prefiled 12/31/20.

1 AN ACT Relating to the creation of health equity zones; adding a
2 new section to chapter 43.70 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** FINDINGS AND INTENT. (1) The legislature
5 finds that people of color and immigrant populations experience
6 significant health disparities compared to the general population,
7 including more limited access to health care and poorer health
8 outcomes. The legislature finds that these circumstances result in
9 higher rates of morbidity and mortality for persons of color and
10 immigrant populations than observed in the general population.

11 (2) Therefore, the legislature intends to create health equity
12 zones to address significant health disparities identified by health
13 outcome data. The state intends to work with community leaders within
14 the health equity zones to share information and coordinate efforts
15 with the goal of addressing the most urgent needs. Health equity zone
16 partners shall develop, expand, and maintain positive relationships
17 with communities of color and immigrant communities within the zone
18 to develop effective and sustainable programs to address health
19 inequity.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 43.70

2 RCW to read as follows:

3 (1) The department, in coordination with the governor's
4 interagency council on health disparities, local health
5 jurisdictions, and accountable communities of health, must share and
6 review population health data, which may be related to chronic and
7 infectious diseases, maternal birth complications, preterm births and
8 other newborn health complications, and any other relevant health
9 data, to identify potential health equity zones in the state.

10 (2) The department may limit the number of identified zones based
11 on available resources but must develop a plan to expand the program
12 statewide.

13 (3) The department must notify relevant community organizations
14 in the zones of the health equity zone designation and allow those
15 organizations to identify projects to address the zone's most urgent
16 needs related to health disparities. Community organizations may
17 include, but are not limited to:

18 (a) Community health clinics;

19 (b) Local health providers;

20 (c) Federally qualified health centers;

21 (d) Health systems;

22 (e) Local government;

23 (f) Local health jurisdictions; and

24 (g) Any other nonprofit organization working to address health
25 disparities in the zone.

26 (4) Organizations working within the zone may form a coalition to
27 identify the needs of the zone, design projects to address those
28 needs, and develop an action plan to implement the projects. Projects
29 may include, but are not limited to:

30 (a) Addressing health care provider access and health service
31 delivery;

32 (b) Improving community trust and information sharing; and

33 (c) Conducting outreach and education efforts.

34 (5) The department must provide:

35 (a) Support to the coalitions in identifying and applying for
36 resources to support projects within the zones; and

37 (b) Technical assistance related to project management and
38 developing health outcome and other measures to evaluate project
39 success.

1 (6) By December 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, the department
2 must submit a report to the legislature detailing the projects
3 implemented in each zone and the outcome measures, including year-
4 over-year health data, to demonstrate project success.

5 (7) For the purposes of this section "health equity zone" or
6 "zone" means a contiguous geographic area that demonstrates
7 measurable and documented health disparities and poor health
8 outcomes, which may include but are not limited to high rates of
9 maternal complications, newborn health complications, and chronic and
10 infectious disease, is populated by communities of color or immigrant
11 communities, and is small enough for targeted interventions to have a
12 significant impact on health outcomes and health disparities.

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