
SENATE BILL 5780

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2024 Regular Session

By Senators Torres, Dhingra, Padden, Boehnke, and L. Wilson

Prefiled 12/04/23.

1 AN ACT Relating to expanding training opportunities for public
2 defense; adding a new section to chapter 2.70 RCW; and creating a new
3 section.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that the current
6 generation entering the public defense profession seeks comprehensive
7 training and mentorship. Training and peer support are needed to
8 build the confidence and skills necessary to establish and maintain
9 public defense careers, particularly in rural and underserved areas.
10 However, training offered by local public defense programs varies,
11 and rural and less-populated jurisdictions may lack the resources to
12 conduct in-house training programs. High quality national training
13 programs are inaccessible to many due to high costs and the time
14 commitment required to attend. The legislature finds that it can
15 encourage participation and longevity in public defense practice by
16 funding the office of public defense to expand its criminal defense
17 training academy program to serve as a statewide training resource
18 for both new public defense practitioners and those seeking to
19 achieve advanced qualifications.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 2.70 RCW
2 to read as follows:

3 Subject to appropriations, the office of public defense shall
4 expand the capacity of its criminal defense training academy program
5 to train practitioners who are new to public defense. The program
6 must include and prioritize training for practitioners in underserved
7 areas and rural areas of the state. The program must offer intensive
8 trial skill development, incorporate public defense best practices
9 and applicable standards, and offer networking opportunities.
10 Trainings may incorporate in-person, remote, and recorded resources.
11 By June 30, 2026, the office of public defense shall expand program
12 offerings to also provide training to public defense practitioners
13 who are seeking to achieve advanced qualifications.

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