

HB 1628: CREATION OF THE FIRE SERVICE POLICY BOARD



BACKGROUND

In 2023, the Fire Service Delivery Workgroup was authorized by the Legislature to study the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that face the Washington Fire Service. The workgroup was made up of fire service subject matter experts including the Presidents, Executive Directors, and staff from the WA State Council of Firefighters, WA Firefighter's Association, WA Fire Chiefs, WA Fire Commissioners, and the WA Department of Commerce. Other stakeholders, including the Washington State Patrol, the WA Fire Marshal's Association, the fire sprinkler installers and other regulated industries joined for discussions throughout 2023.

The workgroup published the "Fire Service Delivery Report" in January of 2024, publishing findings and providing short- and long-term recommendations to improve the State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO). The Work Group concluded that the State Fire Marshal's Office has been significantly deprioritized and underfunded for well over a decade. Over the last 10 years, just 3.4% of the state fire marshal's office policy level budget requests were funded, while the fire service training account's year-end balance declined \$6.2 million over the last 12 years due to insufficient funding.

Washington Fire Service leaders and stakeholders are united on the need to develop a plan and advise the state director of fire protection on critical needs and service delivery priorities. A direct voice, codified in law, is necessary to ensure Washington's residents and visitors receive the highest quality fire service possible.

The Washington Fire Service provides essential public safety services to the citizens and visitors of Washington State. Washington Fire Service leaders and stakeholders are united on addressing the concerns outlined in the "Fire Service Delivery Report" and are committed to working together to improve the current structure, staffing, systems, and governance issues.

THE PROBLEM

The Fire Service Delivery Report identifies critical needs and recommendations for the Washington Fire Service. More work is needed to ensure the identified performance gaps are prioritized and addressed.

THE SOLUTION

Create and convene a Fire Service Policy Board, consisting of fire service experts representing the five primary fire service associations in Washington, to advise the state director of fire protection on all aspects of fire-related policy and budget priorities.

Please support the passage of HB 1628 and help ensure our fire service leaders and partners have the best opportunity possible to meet the challenging needs of Washington State.

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