



STATE OF WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR BOB FERGUSON

March 30, 2026

To the Honorable Speaker and Members,
The House of Representatives of the State of Washington

Esteemed Colleagues:

I am returning herewith, without my approval as to Section 4, Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill No. 1903 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to establishing a statewide low-income energy assistance program."

This bill establishes a statewide low-income energy assistance program in the Department of Commerce. I support efforts to improve affordability for Washingtonians. In my budget, I proposed additional funding for an existing energy assistance program, and the Legislature approved \$30 million additional funding for that program.

HB 1903 states that the low-income energy assistance program won't start until the Legislature provides funding for it, except for Section 4. Section 4 would start immediately despite the lack of funding provided to the agency. Specifically, Section 4 directs the Department of Commerce to establish an advisory group that will inform the energy assistance program. While I support the role of the advisory group, given the lack of funding, I am vetoing Section 4 of House Bill No. 1903.

When directing agencies to accomplish work associated with bills, the Legislature must include adequate funding to do so. The Department of Commerce, like other state agencies, is operating with limited resources due to budget reductions taken in both the biennial and the supplemental budgets. Commerce's budget has been reduced by approximately 10 percent. They cannot absorb this unfunded work within their budget.

Furthermore, the work of the advisory group is not needed until the program itself receives funding from the Legislature.

For these reasons I am vetoing Section 4 of Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill No. 1903.

With the exception of Section 4, Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill No. 1903 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Ferguson
Governor