



**STATE OF WASHINGTON**  
**— OFFICE OF GOVERNOR BOB FERGUSON —**

April 1, 2026

To the Honorable President and Members,  
The Senate of the State of Washington

Esteemed Colleagues:

I am returning herewith, without my approval as to Sections 119(13), 119(14), 127(29), 130, page 71, lines 27-29, 131(3), 154(12), 201(12), 203(2)(c), 211(51), 211(74), 211(79), 220(3)(b), 222(7), 226, page 318, line 34 - page 319, line 17, 235(22), 236(5), page 370, line 14 beginning with "Within" through line 29, 302(17), 501(2)(d), 701(4), 801, page 541, lines 16-19, 802, page 549, lines 6-8, 113(19), 148(3), 225(29), and 714, Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5998 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to fiscal matters."

**Section 119(13), page 27, Office of the Secretary of State, Washington State Talking Book and Braille Library**

This section directs the Office of the Secretary of State to set aside \$4,145,000 solely for the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library. This is more than is needed for the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library, thereby restricting the use of over \$1 million that could be used for other purposes, such as institutional libraries and other library services statewide. The Secretary of State has committed to utilizing a portion of these funds to keep the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library operational. Therefore, I am vetoing Section 119(13).

**Section 119(14), pages 27-28, Office of the Secretary of State, Primetime Family Reading**

This section provides funding for instructors and additional books to support Humanities Washington's Prime Time Family Reading program, which provides reading assistance to elementary school children and their families. Educational programs like these are important, but our state's fiscal situation necessitates tough choices. For this reason, I am vetoing Section 119(14).

**Section 127(29), pages 52-53, Department of Commerce, Retail Crime Prevention**

This section provides funding for a contract with an organization to coordinate community efforts around preventing incidents of retail crime, including coordination between law enforcement, retail stores and therapeutic courts. While preventing incidents of retail crime is important, our state's fiscal situation necessitates tough choices. Therefore, I am vetoing Section 127(29).

**Section 130, page 71, lines 27-29, Department of Commerce, Andy Hill CARE Fund Authority**

This section reduces the Andy Hill Cancer Research Match Transfer Account appropriation from \$22.2 million to \$10 million. The account is projected to have approximately \$18 million in

resources available to spend. To restore the appropriation to an amount sufficient to spend the available revenues in the account, I am vetoing Section 130, page 71, line 27-29.

**Section 131(3), page 77, Department of Commerce, Clean Energy Permitting/Planning**

This section specifies that priority shall be given to awards in jurisdictions where transmission constraints or rapid load growth threaten reliability and achievement of clean energy goals. The funding in this section has already been awarded and cannot be distributed according to these provisions. However, to the extent funding that has already been granted is returned to the Department, I direct the Department to make awards in accordance with the vetoed language. Further, the Department shall place \$490,000 in unallotted status as these funds have been appropriated to a separate division within the agency. For these reasons, I am vetoing Section 131(3).

**Section 154(12), pages 129-131, Washington Technology Solutions, IT Project Oversight**

This section provides additional requirements for Washington Technology Solutions to update and maintain its public IT project dashboard. While I support the effort to enhance IT project spending transparency, this new language includes a requirement that projected spending must not exceed the enacted budget amounts by fund by fiscal year. This language removes an agency's ability to adjust to schedule changes, thereby creating compliance risks, added administrative burden, and potential project delays even when total biennial funding remains sufficient. For these reasons, I am vetoing Section 154(12).

**Section 201(12), page 143, Department of Social and Health Services, Reimagine Structure**

This section outlines the Legislature's intent to make organizational changes in the 2027-29 biennial operating budget, as was requested by the Department of Social and Health Services and included in the governor's December 2025 operating budget proposal. This restructuring of the department consolidates DSHS-operated facilities under the Behavioral Health and Habilitation Administration and creates a distinct Home and Community Living Administration for the home and community services to more efficiently serve clients. This section prescribes a specific budget structure for the reorganization and states that the Legislature's preferred structure must be included in the governor's 2026 budget proposal.

However, the decision-making authority for what is or is not included within a governor's budget resides with the governor. For this reason, I am vetoing Section 201(12).

**Section 203(2)(c), pages 164-165, Department of Social and Health Services, Community Dental Services at Residential Habilitation Centers**

This section requires the Department of Social and Health Services to develop a pilot program, in collaboration with the Health Care Authority, for individuals with developmental disabilities to access dental services at the state-run residential habilitation centers. Two of the four residential habilitation centers are expected to close once the census reaches a certain threshold, making this only a temporary solution to a long-term barrier to community services. For this reason, I am vetoing Section 203(2)(c).

However, I acknowledge that individuals with developmental disabilities experience

extraordinary barriers to receiving dental services and believe that a long-term solution needs to be explored. Therefore, I am directing the Department of Social and Health Services and the Health Care Authority, in partnership with representatives from the dentistry profession, to continue to develop a plan to expand access to dental services for individuals with developmental disabilities in the community. This plan must align with the state's commitment to community-based living by exploring sustainable solutions for providers in the same communities in which these clients reside.

**Section 211(51), page 209-210 & Section 226, page 318, line 34 - page 319, line 17, Health Care Authority & Department of Health, 988 Technology Platform IT Project**

These sections provide funding from the Statewide 988 Behavioral Health and Suicide Prevention Line account and require WaTech oversight of the interoperable, cross-agency 988 Technology Platform IT Project. This project is now on hold, and the Legislature reduced project funding at both the Health Care Authority and Department of Health. However, the funding in fiscal year 2026 was reduced to levels insufficient to cover costs already incurred. For this reason, I am vetoing Section 211(51) and Section 226, page 318, line 34 – page 319, line 17. The Health Care Authority and Department of Health are to coordinate with WaTech and the Office of Financial Management to determine final costs and formally close out the project. All unspent funds are to remain in unallotted status.

**Section 211(74), page 219, Health Care Authority, New Medicaid Quality Improvement Program**

This section directs the Health Care Authority to work with managed care organizations, public hospitals, and publicly owned or operated health care entities to develop a new Medicaid Quality Improvement Program. It is unclear if that work would result in a viable proposal, and the possibility exists it may put Washington's existing program at risk. This would divert agency resources from high-priority, federally driven activities. For these reasons I am vetoing Section 211(74).

**Section 211(79), pages 221-223, Health Care Authority, Electronic Health Records Reporting**

This section directs the Health Care Authority to submit an unnecessarily detailed and burdensome plan for approval by the technology services board before moving forward with an electronic health records project already identified as the preferred option by the executive branch. Funding was not provided for the work associated with plan development and this analysis is not necessary for the project to move forward. For these reasons, I am vetoing Section 211(79).

**Section 220(3)(b), page 288, Department of Veterans Affairs, Suicide Prevention Community-based Services Grant Program**

This section states that funding is sufficient for the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs to maintain operations for the suicide prevention community-based services grant program established in RCW 43.60A.260. The 2026 supplemental budget reduced funding for the staff that administers this program, so funding is no longer sufficient to administer the program. Staff and resources will need to be diverted from other programs to continue this program. For these reasons, I am vetoing Section 220(3)(b).

**Section 222(7), page 296, Department of Health, Transitioning the Watch Me Grow Program to Electronic Newsletters**

This section directs the Department of Health to end the practice of mailing physical newsletters for the Watch Me Grow program beginning fiscal year 2027. The department currently has prepaid postage and printed newsletters which were obtained prior to this decision. The resources are expected to be distributed through fiscal year 2026 and continue into the beginning of fiscal year 2027. For this reason, I am vetoing Section 222(7). However, I am directing the Department of Health to continue to transition the Watch Me Grow newsletters to a digital format to be delivered electronically once the existing resources have been distributed.

**Section 235(22), page 366, Department of Children, Youth, and Families, 30-Day Program/Procedure Notification**

This section directs the Department of Children, Youth, and Families' Juvenile Rehabilitation program to provide at least 30 days' notice prior to program or procedure changes if it is determined that the change is likely to have an adverse impact on a majority of the program's clients. This requirement is already established for DCYF in section 233 of the budget and including it in the JR program section is duplicative. For this reason, I am vetoing Section 235 (22).

**Section 236(5), page 370, line 14 beginning with "Within" through line 29, Department of Children, Youth and Families, Joint Dashboard**

This proviso directs the Department of Children, Youth, and Families and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop best practices, shared strategies, and data-sharing approaches to produce public facing dashboards, all within existing resources. The agencies cannot complete the dashboards by the June 30, 2026, deadline provided. For this reason, I am vetoing Section 236(5), page 370, line 14, beginning with "Within" through line 29. I am also directing the Department of Children, Youth and Families to work with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to strengthen alignment in data collection for early learning programs and make that data available to the public.

**Section 302(17), page 386, Department of Ecology, Climate Resilience Workgroup**

This section reduces funding for the Department of Ecology to lead the Interagency Climate Resilience Coordinating Council and carry out Washington's climate resilience strategy under Chapter 70A.05 RCW. State law requires Ecology to convene the council, update the strategy every four years, and report biennially on the state's progress. Eliminating this capacity also puts at risk awarded funding from the U.S. Climate Alliance that is contingent on maintaining state staff capacity. For this reason, I am vetoing Section 302(17).

**Section 501(2)(d), pages 428-429, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Joint Dashboard**

This proviso directs the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to develop best practices, shared strategies, and data-sharing approaches to produce public facing dashboards, all within existing resources. The agencies cannot complete the dashboards by the June 30, 2026, deadline provided. For this reason, I am

vetoing Section 501(2)(d). I am also encouraging the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to work with the Department of Children, Youth and Families to strengthen alignment in data collection for early learning programs and make that data available to the public.

**Section 701(4), page 526-528, Office of Financial Management, Information Technology Investment Pool**

Section 701(4) includes a new requirement that projected spending amounts within project technology budgets not exceed enacted budget amounts by fund and by fiscal year. This requirement has significant implications for IT projects funded with biennial appropriations, which traditionally allow spending flexibility across the two-year period. By limiting projected spending to amounts by fund and by fiscal year, this language removes an agency's ability to adjust to schedule changes, thereby creating compliance risks, added administrative burdens, and potential project delays even when total biennial funding remains sufficient. For these reasons, I am vetoing Section 701(4).

**Section 801, page 541, lines 16-19, Office of the Treasurer, Death Investigations Account Appropriation**

This section increases the appropriation for the death investigations account by \$1,424,000. There is not enough revenue in the account to support this increase in expenditure. For this reason, I am vetoing Section 801, page 541, lines 16-19.

**Section 802, page 549, lines 6-8, Department of Ecology, Air Operating Permit Account**

This section directs the Office of the State Treasurer to transfer funding from the Air Operating Permit Account to the General Fund-State. This transfer would be inconsistent with federal rule (40 Code of Federal Regulations Part 70) restricting the use of these funds solely for costs associated with the state's air quality program. For this reason, I am vetoing Section 802, page 549, lines 6-8.

The following sections provide funding to agencies to implement bills which did not pass the Legislature. Because the funding has lapsed, I am vetoing Section 113(19), Section 148(3), Section 225(29), and Section 714.

**Section 113(19), page 14, Administrative Office of the Courts, Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 6070, Recovery of Missing Persons**

**Section 148(3), page 119, Public Employment Relations Commission, Substitute Senate Bill, 5972, Correctional Officers Arbitration**

**Section 225(29), page 311, Department of Health, Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2168, Overdose Mapping**

**Section 714, pages 537-538, Office of Financial Management, House Bill 2675, Adult Day Service Facilities Account**

For these reasons I have vetoed Sections 119(13), 119(14), 127(29), 130, page 71, lines 27-29, 131(3), 154(12), 201(12), 203(2)(c), 211(51), 211(74), 211(79), 220(3)(b), 222(7), 226, page 318, line 34 - page 319, line 17, 235(22), 236(5), page 370, line 14 beginning with "Within" through line 29, 302(17), 501(2)(d), 701(4), 801, page 541, lines 16-19, 802, page 549, lines 6-8, 113(19), 148(3), 225(29), and 714 of Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5998.

With the exception of Sections 119(13), 119(14), 127(29), 130, page 71, lines 27-29, 131(3), 154(12), 201(12), 203(2)(c), 211(51), 211(74), 211(79), 220(3)(b), 222(7), 226, page 318, line 34 - page 319, line 17, 235(22), 236(5), page 370, line 14 beginning with "Within" through line 29, 302(17), 501(2)(d), 701(4), 801, page 541, lines 16-19, 802, page 549, lines 6-8, 113(19), 148(3), 225(29), and 714, Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5998 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob Ferguson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Bob Ferguson  
Governor