



Department of Commerce
 2023-25 Regular Budget Session
 Maintenance Level - EC - Long Term Care Ombuds

Agency Recommendation Summary

The Washington State Long Term Care (LTC) Ombuds Program is a statewide, independent program that advocates solely on behalf of the individuals in live-in licensed long-term care settings. In December of 2020, a report found that the LTC Ombuds program was significantly underfunded, and had 58% of the recommended staff needed to serve all residents to meet its obligations to residents and the number of licensed long-term care beds continues to grow. The Department of Commerce (department) requests to increase the capacity of the LTC Ombudsman Program to meet the service demands, and account for some limited projected bed growth.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2024	2025	2023-25	2026	2027	2025-27
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$816	\$1,564	\$2,380	\$2,192	\$2,827	\$5,019
Total Expenditures	\$816	\$1,564	\$2,380	\$2,192	\$2,827	\$5,019

Decision Package Description

What is the problem, opportunity or priority you are addressing with the request?

The LTC Ombuds has a state and federal mandate to advocate for residents of nursing homes, assisted living facilities, adult family homes and other licensed settings. Its mandate is to protect and promote that the resident rights are guaranteed under state and federal law. Program staff and certified volunteers are trained to receive complaints and resolve problems in situations involving quality of care, use of restraints, transfer and discharge, neglect and abuse and other issues impacting residents' dignity and rights.

In 2020, the Washington State Legislature included a proviso in the supplemental operating budget that required the department to make recommendations on a sustainable, transparent, and reactive funding model for the operation of the LTC Ombuds program based on the results of stakeholder meetings with multiple state agencies. The results found that the LTC Ombuds program was significantly underfunded, and had 58% of the recommended staff needed to serve all residents to meet its obligations to residents. Since this time, the number of licensed beds has grown by more than 10%, meaning the challenge of the challenge of the Ombuds office is even greater.

What is your proposal?

The department proposes a six-year plan to increase the capacity of the LTC Ombudsman Program to meet the service demands, and accounts for some limited projected bed growth. This plan includes a 5% per year growth over the six years to the current base funding as well as additional funds to increase the number of LTC Ombuds staff.

This proposal includes the LTC Ombuds adding 24 FTEs over the six-year plan. By FY27 the LTC Ombuds will be staffed at the level recommended by the Institutes of Medicine.

What are you purchasing and how does it solve the problem?

The department's proposal will purchase additional staff that can help ensure the department meets the Institute of Medicine's recommendation of one full-time ombudsman staff person for every 2,000 long term care facility beds in the state.

What alternatives were explored by the agency and why was this option chosen?

No other alternatives have been explored by the department at this time other than its reliance on volunteers to assist in meeting the state and federal mandates placed on the Ombuds office. The Ombuds office has done the best it can with the resources it has even though the number of beds in the state continues to grow.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This proposal expands the existing Long Term Care Ombudsman Program. Historical expenditures for this program are as follows:

2019-2021 Biennium

0.76 FTE

Salaries and Wages: \$111,541

Benefits: \$41,520

Goods and Services: \$16,346

Grants, Benefits and Client Services: \$4,144,123

Inter-agency Reimbursements: (\$1,504,211)

Intra-agency Reimbursements: \$47,191

2019-2021 Total Expenditures: \$2,856,511

2021-2023 Biennium

0.70 FTE

Salaries and Wages: \$84,769

Benefits: \$31,993

Goods and Services: \$39,826

Grants, Benefits and Client Services: \$4,418,971

Inter-agency Reimbursements: (\$1,117,028)

Intra-agency Reimbursements: \$38,415

2021-2023 Total Budget: \$3,496,946

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

To achieve the activities identified, the department requests the following:

Fiscal Year 2024

Grants, Benefits, Client Services: \$816,000

Fiscal Year 2025

Grants, Benefits, Client Services: \$1,564,000

Fiscal Year 2026

Grants, Benefits, Client Services: \$2,192,000

Fiscal Year 2027

Grants, Benefits, Client Services: \$2,827,000

Workforce Assumptions:

None.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

This request directly ties to the Results Washington Goal of **Health and Safe Communities**: Fostering the health of Washingtonians from a healthy start to safe and supported future.

This request supports all five the department's goals:

- Reduce Homelessness and Expand Housing Inventory;
- Create Digital Equity and Connectivity through Broadband;
- Accelerate Clean Energy Transformation through Infrastructure, Investments, and Policy;
- Support Entrepreneurship, Small Businesses and Regional Economic Growth;
- Promote Development of the Innovation Economy and Globally Trade Sectors

And supports four of the agency's strategic objectives:

Objective: Understand the needs and challenges affecting their access to resources through deep community engagement and outreach.

Objective: Consult with community partners on our data and data-informed decisions.

Objective: Dismantle barriers to access and provide support so that communities across the state are positioned to access resources.

Objective: Build systems that enable data-informed decision-making to improve equity.

Performance Outcomes:

The department will be able to visit/reach out to more long-term residents and facilities, increasing its ability to meet the requirements set forth in the Older Americans Act.

Equity Impacts

Community outreach and engagement:

Not applicable.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

Not applicable.

Target Populations or Communities:

Without substantive data available, the equity impact would be would be disparate and oppressed cultures and individuals may need behavioral health services more frequently and with the funding shortfall, the contractor will not be able to provide those services.

Other Collateral Connections

Puget Sound Recovery:

Not applicable.

State Workforce Impacts:

None.

Intergovernmental:

No opposition is anticipated from this request. The department anticipates support from the Department of Social and Health Services, the Department of Health, the Office of Financial Management, the Office of the Governor, the Long-Term Care Ombuds program, representatives of long term care facilities, representatives for the area agencies on aging, and other stakeholders as these entities were all part of the study finding the LTC Ombuds program was severely understaffed.

Stakeholder Response:

Residents of nursing homes, adult family homes and assisted living facilities should all be impacted by this proposal as it is anticipated that the department's ability to advocate for residents of these facilities will be greatly increased.

State Facilities Impacts:

None.

Changes from Current Law:

Not applicable.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

Not applicable.

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
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Obj. N	\$816	\$1,564	\$2,380	\$2,192	\$2,827	\$5,019

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