

CERTIFICATION OF ENROLLMENT

**SENATE BILL 5551**

Chapter 398, Laws of 2019

66th Legislature  
2019 Regular Session

COURTHOUSE FACILITY DOGS

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 28, 2019

Passed by the Senate April 24, 2019  
Yeas 48 Nays 0

CYRUS HABIB

**President of the Senate**

Passed by the House April 16, 2019  
Yeas 96 Nays 2

FRANK CHOPP

**Speaker of the House of Representatives**

Approved May 13, 2019 4:46 PM

JAY INSLEE

**Governor of the State of Washington**

CERTIFICATE

I, Brad Hendrickson, Secretary of the Senate of the State of Washington, do hereby certify that the attached is **SENATE BILL 5551** as passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives on the dates hereon set forth.

BRAD HENDRICKSON

**Secretary**

FILED

May 16, 2019

**Secretary of State  
State of Washington**

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**SENATE BILL 5551**

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AS AMENDED BY THE HOUSE

Passed Legislature - 2019 Regular Session

**State of Washington**                      **66th Legislature**                      **2019 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Dhingra, Palumbo, Das, Kuderer, Wellman, and Van De Wege

Read first time 01/23/19. Referred to Committee on Law & Justice.

1            AN ACT Relating to courthouse facility dog assistance for  
2    testifying witnesses; and adding a new section to chapter 10.52 RCW.

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

4            NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 1.**    A new section is added to chapter 10.52  
5    RCW to read as follows:

6            (1) Courts are authorized to permit a courthouse facility dog for  
7    use by witnesses in any judicial proceeding.

8            (2) Courts with an available courthouse facility dog must allow a  
9    witness under eighteen years of age, or who has a developmental  
10    disability as defined in RCW 71A.10.020, to use a courthouse facility  
11    dog to accompany them while testifying in court.

12            (3) Courts may allow any witness who does not meet the criteria  
13    in subsection (2) of this section to use a courthouse facility dog,  
14    if available, to accompany them while testifying in court.

15            (4) Before the introduction of a courthouse facility dog into the  
16    courtroom and outside the presence of the jury, the party desiring to  
17    use the assistance of a courthouse facility dog must file a motion  
18    setting out: (a) The credentials of the courthouse facility dog; (b)  
19    that the courthouse facility dog is adequately insured; (c) that a  
20    relationship has been established between the witness and the  
21    courthouse facility dog in anticipation of testimony; and (d) reasons

1 why the courthouse facility dog is necessary to facilitate the  
2 witness's testimony.

3 (5) Upon a finding that the presence of a courthouse facility dog  
4 is necessary to facilitate a witness's testimony, the witness must be  
5 afforded the opportunity to have a courthouse facility dog accompany  
6 the witness while testifying, if a courthouse facility dog and  
7 certified handler are available within the jurisdiction of the court  
8 in which the proceeding is held.

9 (6) If the court grants the motion filed under subsection (4) of  
10 this section, the certified handler must be present in the courtroom  
11 to advocate for the facility dog as necessary. The courthouse  
12 facility dog performing this service should be trained to accompany  
13 the witness to the stand without being attached to the certified  
14 handler by a leash and lie on the floor out of view of the jury while  
15 the witness testifies.

16 (7) In a jury trial, the following provisions apply:

17 (a) In the course of jury selection, either party may, with the  
18 court's approval, voir dire prospective jury members on whether the  
19 presence of a courthouse facility dog to assist a witness would  
20 create undue sympathy for the witness or cause prejudice to a party  
21 in any other way.

22 (b) To the extent possible, the court shall ensure that the jury  
23 will be unable to observe the facility dog prior to, during, and  
24 subsequent to the witness's testimony.

25 (c) On request of either party, the court shall present  
26 appropriate jury instructions that are designed to prevent any  
27 prejudice that might result from the presence of the courthouse  
28 facility dog before the witness testifies and at the conclusion of  
29 the trial.

30 (8) Courts may adopt rules for the use of a courthouse facility  
31 dog authorized under this section.

32 (9) For purposes of this section:

33 (a) "Certified handler" means a person who (i) was trained to  
34 handle the courthouse facility dog by the assistance dog organization  
35 that placed the dog and (ii) is a professional working in the legal  
36 system who is knowledgeable about its practices.

37 (b) "Courthouse facility dog" means a dog that: (i) Has graduated  
38 from a program of an assistance dog organization that is accredited  
39 by a recognized organization whose main purpose is to grant  
40 accreditation to assistance dog organizations based on standards of

1 excellence in all areas of assistance dog acquisition, training of  
2 the dogs and their handlers, and placement; and (ii) was specially  
3 selected to provide services in the legal system to provide quiet  
4 companionship to witnesses during stressful legal proceedings thereby  
5 enabling them to better engage with the process.

Passed by the Senate April 24, 2019.

Passed by the House April 16, 2019.

Approved by the Governor May 13, 2019.

Filed in Office of Secretary of State May 16, 2019.

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