



STATE OF WASHINGTON
— OFFICE OF GOVERNOR BOB FERGUSON —

SIGNED INTO LAW TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2025

ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL (ESSB) 5167.PL 1
NEW SECTION.FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE—COMMUNITY SERVICES

SECTION 129 –

**CHARLES MITCHELL & GEORGE WASHINGTON BUSH STUDY ON REPARATIVE ACTION
for
WASHINGTON STATE’S DESCENDANTS OF VICTIMS OF UNITED STATES CHATTEL SLAVERY**

\$150,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2026 and \$150,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2027 are provided solely for the department, in consultation with the state commission on African American affairs, to contract with a qualified research entity to conduct the Charles Mitchell and George Washington Bush study on reparative action for Washington state's descendants of victims of United States chattel slavery.

(a) The department shall verify and contract, in consultation with the commission on African American affairs, that the contracted research entity or research team possesses expertise in reparations, historical analysis, public policy development, and must have the following:

- (i) A researcher who possesses a Ph.D. or equivalent advanced degree in history, African American studies, sociology, American studies, ethnic studies, law, economics, public policy, or a related field with a direct focus on reparations or United States chattel slavery;
- (ii) Verifiable expertise in writing peer-reviewed academic studies, publications, or policy reports related to reparations, historical analysis, public policy development, or economic valuation for direct descendants of United States chattel slavery victims;
- (iii) Expertise in calculating the present value of uncompensated slave labor for direct victims of United States chattel slavery;

(iv) Substantial knowledge of the history and doctrine of United States chattel slavery reparations and the ability to develop a process requiring Washington residents seeking reparations to demonstrate direct descent from individuals enslaved in the United States between 1776 and 1865;

(v) Demonstrated commitment to reviewing and recommending reparations public policy;

(vi) Professional expertise in the field of reparative justice;

(vii) A composition that, to the greatest extent possible, reflects the diversity of individuals with direct lived experience related to the subject matter of the study; and

(viii) An experienced genealogist on their research team.

(b) The department, in consultation with the state commission on African American affairs shall commission and oversee the Charles Mitchell and George Washington Bush study on reparative action for Washington state's descendants of victims of United States chattel slavery, which shall examine the historical injustices of United States chattel slavery and their enduring impact on direct descendants, particularly as they relate to Washington state laws and policies.

The study must include, but is not limited to the following:

(i) Identification, compilation, and synthesization of historical records concerning the institution of United States chattel slavery (1619-1865), including its vestiges within the laws and economic and social practices of Oregon and Washington territories (1848-1889) against freed persons and their direct descendants;

(ii) An assessment of Washington territory and the state of Washington's historical and present role in perpetuating discriminatory practices through laws, policies, and economic structures against direct descendants of the victims of United States chattel slavery, particularly in economic opportunity, education, and criminal justice;

(iii) Appropriate reparative remedies based on study findings, including, but not limited to:

(A) Identified highlights for contributions to federal discussions on reparations, including proposed frameworks for calculating and awarding reparations at the national level;

(B) The identification of existing Washington state laws and policies that continue to disproportionately harm direct descendants of United States enslaved persons and recommendations for their reform or repeal;

(C) Proposed methods for calculating, structuring, and awarding compensation, including both direct cash payments and alternative measures such as enacting appropriate

recommended state-level investments in educational access, economic opportunity, and criminal justice reforms; and

(D) A cost-benefit analysis for Washington state on the impact of enacting appropriate, recommended reparative investments in education, economic opportunity, and criminal justice for the direct descendants of United States chattel slavery victims; and

(iv) Utilization of the social determinants of health framework, as outlined by the healthy people 2030 initiative under the United States department of health and human services, to assess economic, educational, and social disparities with the goal of informing Washington state-level policy recommendations.

(c) The department, in consultation with the state commission on African American affairs, shall transmit the selected research entity or research team's following reports:

(i) A preliminary report to the legislature by June 30, 2026, detailing researcher qualifications, study scope, methodology, and an outline plan for continued community engagement plan throughout the study;

(ii) An interim report by December 31, 2026, providing updates on the study's progress and any initial findings; and

(iii) A final report by June 30, 2027, presenting findings and recommendations to the legislature, the governor, and Washington state's federal delegation.

(d) The department may receive and utilize gifts, grants, or endowments from public, private, or philanthropic sources for the sole purpose of the study.

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