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**SENATE BILL 5907**

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**State of Washington**

**66th Legislature**

**2019 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Kuderer, Das, and Nguyen

Read first time 02/13/19. Referred to Committee on Housing Stability & Affordability.

1 AN ACT Relating to a comparative study of the impact of attorney  
2 representation for tenants in unlawful detainer proceedings; creating  
3 a new section; making appropriations; providing an effective date;  
4 and declaring an emergency.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) From July 1, 2019, until December 31,  
7 2020, the office of civil legal aid must conduct a comparative study  
8 of the impact of attorney representation for tenants in unlawful  
9 detainer proceedings. The office of civil legal aid must contract  
10 with a Washington state-based research institution to compare  
11 outcomes in residential landlord-tenant unlawful detainer cases as  
12 described in subsection (2) of this section in counties with a total  
13 population between four hundred thousand and one million.

14 (2) In each study county, the study must track and compare  
15 outcomes in seven hundred fifty unlawful detainer cases in which  
16 attorneys are randomly appointed to represent the defendant(s) and  
17 seven hundred fifty cases in which no attorney appears on behalf of  
18 the defendant(s). Study data must be disaggregated by gender, race,  
19 age, and other relevant demographic characteristics, as well as the  
20 grounds claimed for eviction, the amount of rent claimed unpaid in  
21 cases where nonpayment of rent is the basis for the unlawful detainer

1 action, and the amount of costs and fees claimed due. The office of  
2 civil legal aid must contract with qualified nonprofit legal aid  
3 providers for legal representation in cases where attorneys are  
4 appointed to represent defendants in unlawful detainer cases involved  
5 in the study. The superior courts in each of the counties are  
6 respectfully requested to work with the office of civil legal aid and  
7 the research institution engaged in the study to facilitate the  
8 random appointment of contracted attorneys in unlawful detainer  
9 cases.

10 (3) A final report on the study must be submitted to the  
11 appropriate committees of the legislature by January 31, 2021.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The sum of nine hundred fifty thousand  
13 dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for  
14 the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, and the sum of three hundred  
15 fifty thousand, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is  
16 appropriated for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, from the  
17 general fund to the office of civil legal aid for the purposes of  
18 this act.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** This act is necessary for the immediate  
20 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of  
21 the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes  
22 effect July 1, 2019.

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