RCW 2.78.010 Establishment. ***(Expires December 31, 2029.)*** The court unification task force is established to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the current Washington state court system, including the review of the inefficiencies and inequities resulting from disparate local court rules, technology adoption, and funding levels, and identify areas where a more unified or centralized approach to court operations may improve efficiency and uniformity in the delivery of court and judicial services, as well as consistency in outcomes and ease of access for those who use the court system, including victims, defendants, litigants, and counsel. [2026 c 199 s 2.]

Findings—Intent—2026 c 199: "(1) The legislature finds that:

(a) Washingtonians seeking legal help encounter barriers navigating disparate local court rules or incur increased costs for legal practitioners to navigate these systems;

(b) Specific groups of Washingtonians, such as those living in rural areas or in poverty, may be inequitably impacted by courts' disparate adoption of technology to create remote filing, record sharing, processes, procedures, and hearings;

(c) Disparate local rules and adoption of technology make it difficult for lawyers, including those engaging in pro bono and legal aid work, to practice in multiple jurisdictions, exacerbating Washington's "legal deserts";

(d) Washingtonians seeking legal help may encounter inequitable outcomes due to disparate funding levels and standards from jurisdiction to jurisdiction;

(e) City and county leaders have expressed significant and urgent concerns with their ability to fund and implement the Washington state bar association's new standards for indigent defense, which derive from a constitutional mandate; and

(f) Disparate funding between the state's court systems can cause inequitable and inconsistent means for jurisdictions to implement and uphold best legal practices and standards.

(2) The legislature further finds that potential solutions to these issues warrant further study, including data collection to better understand the impact to the public and the legal profession of disparate local rules, technology, and funding between Washington's court systems.

(3) Therefore, the legislature intends to convene and meaningfully engage stakeholders across Washington state, especially those in rural areas, and to study the inefficiencies and inequities resulting from disparate local court rules, funding, and technology." [2026 c 199 s 1.]