SENATE BILL REPORT
SB 6149

As of January 28, 2026

Title: An act relating to the definition of "rural county" for purposes of public facilities funding.

Brief Description: Concerning the definition of "rural county" for purposes of public facilities funding.

Sponsors: Senators Wilson, J., Dozier, Short and Chapman.

Brief History:
Committee Activity: Business, Trade & Economic Development: 1/28/26.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Defines a county with a population density of 100 persons per square mile or greater, with no city with a population greater than 75,000 persons, as a rural county.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS, TRADE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Staff: William Bridges (786-7312)

Background: A rural county is defined as a county with a population density less than 100 persons per square mile or a county smaller than 225 square miles, as determined by the Office of Financial Management. Several statutes use this definition for tax and other assistance programs, including but not limited to statutes referencing public facilities loans and grants, the coordination of community and economic development services, and excise taxes. As of 2025, there are 27 rural counties.

Summary of Bill: The definition of rural county is changed. In addition to the current definition of rural county, a county with a population density of 100 persons per square mile or greater, with no city with a population greater than 75,000 persons, is also defined as a rural county.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 14, 2026.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Cowlitz County is a rural county and its growth is occurring in one urban center. This has caused Cowlitz County to lose its rural county classification, which means it is no longer eligible for many economic development programs.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Jeff Wilson, Prime Sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.