

# HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

## HB 1125

**Brief Description:** Allowing the Department of Social and Health Services access to Employment Security Department data on clients in the job opportunities and basic skills training program and any subsequent state welfare program.

---

**Sponsors:** Representatives McMorris, Ogden, Regala, and H. Sommers; by request of the Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee

Hearing: February 3, 1997

### **BACKGROUND:**

With certain exceptions, the Employment Security Department is obligated to keep records regarding individuals and employers confidential. A government agency may access this confidential information when the information is needed by the agency for official purposes. Except for emergencies and other limited situations, the agency requesting information, other than the Legislature, must submit an application to the Employment Security Department specifically identifying the records sought, must verify the need for the specific information in writing, and must serve a copy of the application on the individual or employer whose records are sought. The person served has five days to object to release of the records, and the Employment Security Department must consider any objections raised in deciding whether the agency needs the information for official purposes.

Within certain limitations, government agencies may have access to confidential information that does not require the requesting agency to serve a copy of the application on the individual or employer whose records are sought.

In 1996, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) completed a performance audit of the Job Opportunity and Basic Skills Training Program (JOBS). The program provides education and job skills training to individuals who receive assistance through the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and who are able to work. Some education and training and placement services are provided through the Employment Security Department. JLARC recommends that the two agencies share information to assess the effectiveness of the program. The Department of Social and Health Services needs access to employment and wage data collected by the Employment Security Department on clients identified by DSHS who are in the JOBS program. The requirements limiting access to confidential information held by the Employment Security Department may not allow this

exchange of information.

**SUMMARY OF BILL:**

The Employment Security Department must share confidential wage information with the Department of Social and Health Services on clients whose names and social security numbers are provided annually by DSHS and who are participants in the Job Opportunity and Basic Skills Training Program. This information may only be used for statistical analysis and welfare program evaluation. Based on information about individuals, the DSHS may report only aggregate, statistical information and must protect the privacy of the individuals' records.

**RULES AUTHORITY:** The bill does not contain provisions addressing the rule-making powers of an agency.

**FISCAL NOTE:** Not requested.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.