

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2688

As Reported By House Committee On:
Health Care

Title: An act relating to hearing instrument fitters and dispensers.

Brief Description: Modifying the educational requirements for licensure as a hearing instrument fitter/dispenser.

Sponsors: Representatives Skinner, Cody, Backlund, Conway and Anderson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care: 1/29/98 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Dyer, Chairman; Backlund, Vice Chairman; Skinner, Vice Chairman; Cody, Ranking Minority Member; Murray, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson; Conway; Parlette; Sherstad; Wood and Zellinsky.

Staff: John Welsh (786-7133).

Background: Hearing Instrument Fitters/Dispensers are licensed by the Department of Health and regulated by the Board of Hearing and Speech. The board also regulates certified audiologists and certified speech-language pathologists.

An applicant for licensing must have at least six months of apprenticeship training approved by the board, but the board may waive part or all of the training for any formal education in fitting and dispensing recognized by the board. Applicants receive one-year permits as Hearing Instrument Fitters/Dispensers Permit Holders to work under the direct supervision of licensees for apprenticeship training.

The department issues interim permits to applicants for certification as audiologists and speech-language pathologists in order to receive postgraduate professional experience as a condition of certification.

Applicants for licensing must be at least 21 years of age.

Summary of Substitute Bill: After December 31, 2002, an applicant for licensing must satisfactorily complete a minimum of a two-year degree program in hearing instrument fitter/dispenser instruction approved by the board. The apprenticeship training program for permit holders under licensees is repealed.

Technically, permits for applicants for certification as audiologists and speech-language pathologists are renamed as interim permits.

The minimum age for applicants for licensing is repealed.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The new educational requirement for licensure applicants takes effect on December 31, 2002, instead of 2003. Technical corrections are made.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed except for sections 1, 3 through 14, and 16 through 21 which take effect January 1, 2003.

Testimony For: As a result of a study, the board recommends that applicants for licensing, after 2002, have at least two years of formal education in fitting and dispensing hearing aids.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Mark Scoonis, Speech & Hearing Board, Department of Health; Ray Harry, State Board for Community & Technical Colleges; and Lisa Thatcher, Washington Society of Hearing Aid Fitters & Dispensers.