

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

SSB 6422

Brief Description: Providing support for collaborative efforts toward worker re employment.

Sponsors: Senators Schow, Heavey, and Winsley, by request of Employment Security Department.

Hearing: February 25, 1998

BACKGROUND:

As the state continues to change the way employment and training services are provided, the need for agencies to share information on clients and customers that use a combination of services increases. One initiative is the One-Stop Career Development System that seeks to provide access to a variety of services at a single physical or electronic location. One-Stop includes participation from partner agencies. The core group of partners includes the Employment Security Department, the Department of Social and Health Services, community and technical colleges, and private industry councils.

With certain exceptions, the Employment Security Department is obligated to keep records regarding individuals and employers confidential. A government agency may request information by submitting an application to the department and notifying the person whose records are sought. A limited number of exceptions to the policy of confidentiality exist in statute. Most recently, the Employment Security Department and the Department of Social and Health Services were authorized to share data on clients in the Work First program with certain restrictions on the use and disclosure of the information.

SUMMARY OF BILL:

The Commissioner of Employment Security Department is authorized to enter into contracts for the sharing of data with partners of the One-Stop career development system. Information may be shared only to the extent necessary to provide services and evaluate outcomes.

Information obtained from Employment Security Department, which is held as confidential by a partner agency under a contract, may not be disclosed. Anyone requesting information

held by a partner agency must request disclosure from the Employment Security Department and not the partner agency.

The misuse or unauthorized release of information by any person or organization to whom access is permitted may be subject to a civil fine of \$5,000 and other applicable penalties. The Attorney General may bring suit to enforce the misuse or unauthorized release of this information and may recover attorney's fees. Any penalties collected must be placed in the Employment Security Department's administrative contingency fund.

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.