

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6422

As Reported By House Committee On:
Commerce & Labor

Title: An act relating to support for collaborative efforts toward worker reemployment.

Brief Description: Providing support for collaborative efforts toward worker reemployment.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Commerce & Labor (originally sponsored by Senators Schow, Heavey and Winsley; by request of Employment Security Department).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Commerce & Labor: 2/25/98, 2/26/98 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives McMorris, Chairman; Conway, Ranking Minority Member; Wood, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Boldt; Hatfield and Lisk.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Honeyford, Vice Chairman; and Clements.

Staff: Pam Madson (786-7166).

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 the 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 attorneys' fees. Any penalties collected must be placed in the Employment Security Department's administrative contingency fund.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The bill is limited to data sharing among partner agencies in the One-Stop Career Development System based on a contract that identifies the data to be shared. A penalty was included to address concerns of the business community that there be a sanction for information that was improperly disclosed. Typically the information will include name, address and phone number. It is also possible that in a program requiring a means test, access to wage information may be necessary. Data exchange is necessary to improve the effectiveness of the One-Stop system and to improve the efficiency for the customer. The job seeker doesn't have to repeat the same information to a number of different agencies. The One-Stop executive policy group is currently working on common necessary data to be collect on individuals such as basic demographic information and some work history information. In no case would it go beyond current privacy rules. Employer community had serious concern over sharing data without some controls and protections. The executive policy group has made the case that this effort is worth the risks.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In favor) Graeme Sackrison and Dennis Cole, Employment Security Department; Wes Pruitt, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; and Clif Finch, Association of Washington Business.