

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1774

As Reported By House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to occupational drivers' licenses.

Brief Description: Regulating occupational drivers' licenses.

Sponsors: Representatives Wolfe, Romero, Tokuda, Stensen, D. Schmidt, Ogden, Gombosky, Keiser, Dickerson and Santos.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 3/1/99, 3/2/99 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Persons whose driver's license has been administratively suspended due to failure to pay a traffic ticket, violation of financial responsibility laws, or multiple infractions within a specified period may apply for an occupational driver's license.
- In order to qualify for an occupational driver's license under SHB 1774, a person must be in one of the following programs where a driver's license is required: (1) a member or an applicant for an apprenticeship program or an on-the-job training program; or (2) a program that assists persons who are on welfare to become gainfully employed.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 27 members: Representatives Fisher, Democratic Co-Chair; K. Schmidt, Republican Co-Chair; Cooper, Democratic 1st Vice Chair; Edwards, Democratic 2nd Vice Chair; Ericksen, Republican Vice Chair; Hankins, Republican Vice Chair; Buck; G. Chandler; DeBolt; Fortunato; Haigh; Hatfield; Hurst; Lovick; McDonald; Mielke; Mitchell; Morris; Murray; Ogden; Pflug; Radcliff; Romero; Schindler; Scott; Skinner and Wood.

Staff: Paul Neal (786-7315).

Background:

Current law allows a person whose license has been mandatorily suspended due to a criminal conviction to obtain an occupational driver's license. In order to qualify for an occupational driver's license the person must show, among other things, that he or she is engaged in an occupation or trade that requires operation of a motor vehicle. There is no provision for persons whose license has been administratively suspended, e.g., for failure to pay a fine, to obtain an occupational driver's license. People who have had their driver's licenses suspended due to failure to pay a fine are often not able to pay the fine because of financial constraints. Proponents of the bill assert that enrollment in an apprenticeship program could give such a person the skills to obtain a job, pay the fine, and in some cases, get off of public assistance.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

A person whose driver's license has been administratively suspended for failure to pay a traffic ticket, violation of financial responsibility laws, or multiple infractions within a specified period, may apply for an occupational driver's license. In order to qualify, the applicant must show that he or she is in one of the following programs where a driver's license is required: (1) a member or an applicant for an apprenticeship program or an on-the-job training program; or (2) a program that assists persons who are on welfare to become gainfully employed.

An occupational driver's license is valid for the period of the suspension but in no case for more than two years. The Department of Licensing is required to cancel the license if the person is no longer enrolled in a qualifying program. If the license is canceled the driver may obtain a new license at no cost by submitting evidence of enrollment in another qualifying program.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The extension of the ability to qualify for an occupational driver's license is limited to persons whose driver's license has been administratively suspended for failure to pay a traffic ticket, violation of financial responsibility laws, or multiple infractions within a specified period.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2000.

Testimony For: (Original bill) This bill would provide a way for persons whose licenses have been suspended for non-criminal reasons to enter into apprenticeship programs where they could earn money to pay off their tickets while learning a job skill, ultimately regaining their full license and acquiring and retaining gainful employment.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Peter Guzman, City of Tacoma; Bob Markholt, Seattle Vocational Institute; Allan Darr, Washington State Building and Contractors Trade; and Dan Sexton, Washington State Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters.