

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1774

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to occupational drivers' licenses.

Brief Description: Regulating occupational drivers' licenses.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Transportation (Originally sponsored by 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].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/11/99, 95-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/14/99, 42-1.

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; (2) a program that assists persons who are on welfare to become gainfully employed; or (3) undergoing substance abuse treatment or participating in a 12-step program such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

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:

A person whose license has been mandatorily suspended or revoked due to a criminal conviction other than vehicular homicide or vehicular assault may obtain an occupational driver's license if the person can show, among other things, that he or she is engaged in an occupation or trade that requires operation of a motor vehicle. A person whose license has been administratively suspended may not obtain an occupational license. People who have had their drivers' licenses administratively 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 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 on-the-job training program; (2) a program that assists persons who are enrolled in a WorkFirst program to become gainfully employed; or (3) undergoing substance abuse treatment or participating in a 12-step program such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

The occupational driver's license is valid for the period of the suspension but in no case for more than two years except that the occupational license for a person who has only applied to be in an apprenticeship program is in effect no longer than 14 days. 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. The Department of Licensing will specify on the occupational driver's license which days and hours and over what routes a person may drive who

is undergoing substance abuse treatment or participating in meetings of a 12-step program.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S): Persons whose driver's license has been administratively suspended may obtain an occupational driver's license to attend a substance abuse or twelve step program. The Department of licensing is prohibited from issuing an occupational driver's license to persons participating in substance abuse programs or twelve step programs who have access to transit services.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: 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.