

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## EHB 1845

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Labor & Workforce Development, April 1, 1999

**Title:** An act relating to the maximum expenditure allowed for vocational rehabilitation benefits under industrial insurance.

**Brief Description:** Providing for vocational rehabilitation benefits under industrial insurance.

**Sponsors:** Representatives B. Chandler, Clements, McMorris, Lisk, Conway and Wood.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Labor & Workforce Development: 3/30/99, 4/1/99 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Hochstatter, Kline and Oke.

**Staff:** Jack Brummel (786-7428)

**Background:** The Department of Labor and Industries is authorized to pay, and may direct self-insured employers to pay, the costs of vocational rehabilitation services for injured workers when these services are necessary and likely to enable the injured worker to become employable at gainful employment. These costs are limited to \$3,000 in a 52-week period and include the cost of books, tuition, fees, supplies, equipment, transportation, child or dependent care, and other necessary expenses. The department may extend the period of benefits for an additional 52 weeks.

**Summary of Bill:** Beginning with vocational rehabilitation plans approved on or after July 1, 1999, the maximum amount that the Department of Labor and Industries may pay, or order a self-insurer to pay, for an injured worker's vocational rehabilitation benefits in a 52-week period is increased from \$3,000 to \$4,000. (The new limit also applies if a second year of benefits is authorized.)

The expenditure limit does not apply to the injured worker's transportation costs.

The department is required to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the benefit increase, including an examination of benefit utilization and vocational results. The analysis must be reported to the Workers' Compensation Advisory Committee and the Legislature by November 1, 2001.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect July 1, 1999.

**Testimony For:** This bill deals with a problem of adequacy in vocational rehabilitation benefits. This will result in better outcomes. This will be good for injured workers.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Representative Chandler, prime sponsor; Dwight Thompson, NARPPS; Marige Weinberg, WA Self-Insurers.