

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5377

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Judiciary, March 3, 1999  
Transportation, March 5, 1999

**Title:** An act relating to occupational drivers' licenses.

**Brief Description:** Regulating occupational drivers' licenses.

**Sponsors:** Senators Kline, Rossi, Costa, Long, Goings, Gardner, Brown, Winsley and Spanel.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Judiciary: 2/17/99, 3/3/99 [DPS].  
Transportation: 3/5/99 [DPS (JUD)].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5377 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Heavey, Chair; Kline, Vice Chair; Costa, Goings, Hargrove, Haugen, Long, McCaslin and Thibaudeau.

**Staff:** Lidia Mori (786-7755)

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5377 as recommended by Committee on Judiciary be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Gardner, Vice Chair; Goings, Vice Chair; Benton, Costa, Horn, Jacobsen, Patterson, Prentice, Sellar, Sheahan, T. Sheldon, Shin and Swecker.

**Staff:** Kelly Simpson (786-7305)

**Background:** People who have had their drivers' licenses suspended or revoked due to failure to pay a fine are often not able to pay the fine because of financial constraints. Proponents of this bill believe that if these people are allowed to have occupational licenses, they would be eligible to enter apprenticeship programs and earn enough money to not only pay their fines but also to get off welfare.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** A person whose driver's license has been suspended or revoked may apply for an occupational driver's license if the applicant demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Department of Licensing (DOL) that: (1) the applicant is in an apprenticeship program or an on-the-job training program for which a driver's license is required; or (2) the applicant has been accepted into an apprenticeship or on-the-job training program conditioned upon receiving an occupational driver's license; or (3) the applicant is

in a program that assists persons who are enrolled in WorkFirst programs to become gainfully employed and requires a driver's license. The person may not apply for an occupational driver's license if his or her license was suspended or revoked due to vehicular homicide, vehicular assault, refusing a blood or breath test, noncompliance with a child support order, or for a physical or mental disability that prevents the person from operating a motor vehicle with safety.

An occupational driver's license is valid for the period of the suspension or revocation but in no case for more than two years. The Department of Licensing must give written notice by first class mail to the driver that his or her occupational license will be canceled upon receipt by the department of evidence that the holder of the license is no longer enrolled in an apprenticeship or on-the-job training program. If evidence is submitted of continued enrollment in an apprenticeship program or on the job training program, then the cancellation will be stayed. If it has already gone into effect, the driver may obtain another occupational license at no charge upon submission of evidence of enrollment in another program that meets the criteria above.

The bill goes into effect January 1, 2000 and expires January 1, 2003.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The original bill allowed a person to apply for and obtain an occupational driver's license if he or she applied for a position in an apprenticeship or on-the-job training program. The substitute requires the person to have actually been accepted into the program conditioned on receiving an occupational driver's license. The original did not contain an expiration date.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 15, 1999.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on January 1, 2000.

**Testimony For:** One reason for which a person's driver's license may be suspended is failure to pay a traffic ticket. The unpaid ticket is sent to collection which results in a larger and larger amount of money due. Since the person's driver's license is suspended, often he or she cannot drive to work and therefore cannot earn the money to pay the traffic fine. Even apprenticeship programs that train people for employment require the person to have a valid driver's license.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Senator Kline (pro); Pete Yongers, Ignition Interlock of WA (pro); Jerry Stanton, Ignition Interlock Systems of WA (pro); Dan Sexton, WA State Assn. of Plumbers and Steamfitters (pro); Peter Guzman, LEAP Coordinator (pro); Lonnie Green (pro); Bob Markholt, Seattle Vocational Institute; Randy Lewis, City of Tacoma (pro).