
Transportation Committee

HB 1597

Brief Description: Allowing holders of commercial drivers' licenses to delay a physical examination.

Sponsors: Representatives Mielke, Armstrong, Boldt, Orcutt, Wood, Woods, Kristiansen, Campbell, Hatfield, Sump and Schoesler.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Eliminates the current requirement that an applicant for a commercial driver's license (CDL) or instruction permit provide proof of physical capacity as a condition of receiving the license.
- Makes it a traffic infraction for a holder of a CDL or instruction permit to drive a commercial vehicle unless they are carrying on their person a medical certificate stating that he or she is fit to drive a commercial vehicle, and establishes a penalty for violation.

Hearing Date: 2/19/03

Staff: Jill Satran (786-7315).

Background:

Under current state law, an applicant for a commercial driver's license (CDL) in Washington state must provide proof that he or she has undergone a physical exam that meets the federal requirements for commercial drivers. Thus, the existing state statute links the two requirements of physical capacity and licensing. Under the federal rules, a driver must provide proof of physical capacity and a valid CDL, but the two are separate requirements.

Summary of Bill:

The intent section of HB 1597 sets out several findings:

- The current economic conditions place a severe hardship on commercial drivers;
- Commercial drivers who may not be working may not be able to afford the cost of the physical exam required to maintain their CDL.;
- Washington state's laws should be harmonized with federal requirements by separating

the requirement to prove physical capacity from the requirement that the individual possess a valid CDL;

- Allowing commercial drivers to delay their physical until they are actually employed as commercial truck drivers will prevent unnecessary expenditures and hardships on commercial vehicle drivers.

The requirement that an application for a CDL or a CDL instruction permit must include proof of a physical exam that meets the federal standards is eliminated.

A new section is added to the Uniform Commercial Drivers Licenses Act prohibiting individuals from driving a commercial motor vehicle unless he or she is physically qualified to do so, and is physically carrying a copy of a medical examiner's certificate that states he or she is fit to drive a commercial vehicle. An exception is provided for drivers of farm vehicles.

This bill makes it a traffic infraction for licensee to drive a commercial vehicle without having a copy of the medical examiner's certificate on their person, and establishes a penalty for the infraction of \$250. This amount can be reduced to \$50 if the individual can provide proof that he or she had the certificate at the time of the infraction.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 11, 2003.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.