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**Commerce & Labor Committee**

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**SB 6356**

**Brief Description:** Modifying physician assistant provisions.

**Sponsors:** Senators Honeyford and Rasmussen.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Allows physician assistants, in non-compensable industrial injury cases, to execute the certificate that accompanies an injured worker's application for industrial insurance benefits until July 1, 2007.
- Requires the Department of Labor and Industries to report to the Legislature on the effects of allowing physician assistants to execute these certificates.

**Hearing Date:** 2/23/04

**Staff:** Jill Reinmuth (786-7134).

**Background:**

A worker who, in the course of employment, is injured or suffers disability from an occupational disease is entitled to benefits under Washington's industrial insurance law. These benefits include proper and necessary medical and surgical services from a physician of the worker's choice. Benefits solely for medical treatment are considered "non-compensable," while benefits for time loss, permanent injury, or death are considered "compensable."

To qualify for benefits, an injured worker is required to file an application for benefits with the Department of Labor and Industries (Department) or his or her self-insured employer. The application must be accompanied by a certificate of the attending physician. Department rules specify that the injured worker and attending physician must file a report of accident upon the determination that the injury or disability is work-related. The report must include the signed findings of the attending physician.

Physician assistants (PAs) are licensed to practice medicine or osteopathic medicine to a limited extent under the supervision of a licensed physician or osteopathic physician respectively. Department rules require PAs to obtain advanced approval from the Department prior to treating industrial injury cases. The rules also limit the industrial insurance services that PAs may provide. PAs may fill out accident and other reports, but the reports must be signed by a physician.

**Summary of Bill:**

For non-compensable industrial injury cases, physician assistants (PAs) practicing with physician supervision are permitted to execute the required physician certificate that accompanies the injured worker's application for industrial insurance benefits. PAs are not authorized to execute physician certificates in occupational disease cases or to execute time loss cards. The authority to execute physician certificates expires June 30, 2007.

The Department of Labor and Industries (Department) is required to report on the implementation of these provisions, including the effects on injured worker outcomes, claim costs, and disputed claims. The Department must report the findings to the Senate Commerce and Trade Committee and to the House Commerce and Labor Committee by December 1, 2006.

**Rules Authority:** The bill does not contain provisions addressing the rule-making authority of an agency.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect July 1, 2004.