
**Insurance, Financial Services &
Consumer Protection Committee**

HB 2258

Brief Description: Requiring a study of implementing a database for small loans.

Sponsors: Representatives Appleton, Kirby, Roach, Hurst, Santos, Kelley and Simpson.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Director of the Department of Financial Institutions to study the cost of a database that allows a licensee to do a real-time check of outstanding small loans and the effectiveness of a database in limiting the possibility of an excessive number of contemporaneous small loans.

Hearing Date: 2/22/07

Staff: Jon Hedegard (786-7127).

Background:

Payday lending practices are regulated by the Department of Financial Institutions (DFI) under the Check Cashers and Sellers Act (Act), Chapter 31.45 RCW. The phrase "payday loan" refers to a type of short-term, unsecured loan that is typically offered to consumers by a business outlet offering check cashing services. In a typical payday loan transaction, the consumer writes the lender a post-dated check and, in return, the lender provides a lesser amount of cash to the consumer after subtracting interest and fees. Following this initial transaction, the lender holds the check for a specified period, during which the consumer has the option of either redeeming the check by paying the face amount to the lender or allowing the lender to cash the check after the loan period has expired.

The Act contains provisions for the licensing and regulation of businesses offering services related to check cashing and the selling of money orders, drafts, checks, and other commercial paper. The Act regulates payday lending practices and provides for regulation of licensees who are specifically authorized to issue small loans. No lender may lend more than \$700 to a single borrower at any one time. The lender may charge up to 15 percent for the first \$500. If the

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borrower has a loan in excess of \$500, the lender can charge up to 10 percent on the amount over \$500. For example, a lender could charge up to \$30 for a \$200 loan or up to \$85 for a \$600 loan.

Under the Act, licensees must maintain business books, accounts, and records. The books and accounts must be maintained for at least two years after a transaction. The DFI also has statutory authority to examine books, accounts, records, and files, or other information of licensees and persons that the agency has reason to believe is engaging in the business governed by Chapter 31.45 RCW.

Borrowers and lenders may agree to a payment plan for payday loans at any time. After four successive loans, and prior to default on the last loan, a borrower is entitled to convert his or her loans into a payment plan with the lender. Such payment plans are subject to the following conditions:

- a written agreement is required;
- the lender may charge the borrower a one-time fee in an amount up to the fee or interest on the outstanding principal;
- the agreement must allow the buyer not less than 60 days to pay off the loan; and
- the borrower must be allowed to pay off the loan in at least three payments.

The Director of the Department of Financial Institutions (Director) may impose the sanctions against any:

- licensee;
- applicant; or
- director, officer, sole proprietor, partner, controlling person, or employee of a licensee.

Sanctions may include:

- the denial, revocation, suspension, or conditioning of a license;
- an order to cease and desist from specific practices;
- the imposition of a fine not to exceed \$100 per day for each day's violation;
- the provision of restitution to borrowers or other injured parties; and
- the removal from office or banning from participation in the affairs of any licensee.

Summary of Bill:

The Director of the Department of Financial Institutions (Director) must study the merits of implementing a real-time database. The database must allow a licensee to verify if a consumer has an outstanding small loan. The director must study:

- the cost of a database; and
- the effectiveness of a database in limiting the possibility of an excessive number of contemporaneous loans.

The Director must provide the study to the financial regulation committees of the Legislature no later than November 30, 2007. The Director may include recommendations based upon the study.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.