

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5153

As Passed Senate, March 8, 2007

Title: An act relating to encouraging employers to be infant-friendly.

Brief Description: Encouraging employers to be infant-friendly.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research & Development (originally sponsored by Senators Franklin, Kohl-Welles, Shin, Weinstein, Oemig, Keiser, Kauffman, Rockefeller, Fairley, Hargrove, Rasmussen, Spanel, Fraser, Jacobsen and Haugen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce, Research & Development: 1/25/07, 2/20/07 [DPS].
Passed Senate: 3/08/07, 41-8.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5153 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Kohl-Welles, Chair; Keiser, Vice Chair; Clements, Ranking Minority Member; Franklin, Murray and Prentice.

Staff: Kathleen Buchli (786-7488)

Background: In 2001, 2SHB 1590 was passed creating the designation of "infant-friendly." An employer may use the "infant-friendly" designation on its promotional materials if the employer has a workplace breastfeeding policy, approved by the Department of Health (DOH), addressing: flexible work scheduling, including work patterns that provide for the expression of breast milk; a convenient, sanitary, and private location, other than a restroom, allowing privacy for breastfeeding or expressing breast milk; a convenient water source with facilities for washing hands and rinsing breast-pump equipment; and a convenient refrigerator in the workplace for the storage of the mother's breast milk.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Employers are encouraged, but not required, to become infant-friendly. If an employer has an infant-friendly policy, the employer must include the policy in that employer's personnel manual. If the employer does not have an infant-friendly policy, that information must be disclosed to requesting employees.

DOH must convene a stakeholder group to develop model infant-friendly policies that may be adjusted to accommodate individual businesses. Sample policies must be provided to employers and employees through existing mailings and resources.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

An appropriation is made to DOH for use in approving workplace infant-friendly policies.

Appropriation: Fifty-five thousand dollars.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: This bill restores language from a 2001 bill that had not been funded. Breastfeeding is important for mothers with infants in the workplace. Breastfeeding leads to bonding between the mother and the infant and better health for the mother and the infant. It is in the best interests of employers and employees to have an infant-friendly workplace. The bill does not add mandates, but is needed so employers will see infant-friendly workplaces are in their best interests. Many workplaces make it difficult for a mother to pump breast milk, and employees need to know if their employer has a breastfeeding policy in place. Affordable health care starts with breastfeeding. Employers with a breastfeeding policy save money; they incur lower health care costs. An infant-friendly designation will bring people in to the business. Mothers are the fastest growing workforce in the United States. Returning to work without employer support reduces breastfeeding.

CON: The language is vague because it is not clear what "encouraged" means. Some employers can make small steps but can't do all that is required for the infant-friendly designation. DOH needs to give information to women on how to talk to their employers.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Rosa Franklin, prime sponsor; Kim Rechner, citizen; and Merrie Lynn Rice, Pierce County Breastfeeding Alliance.

CON: Carolyn Logue, National Federation of Independent Business.