

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6246

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Labor, Commerce, Research & Development, February 05, 2008

Title: An act relating to industrial insurance medical aid claims.

Brief Description: Authorizing travel expenses for certain industrial insurance medical aid claims.

Sponsors: Senator Honeyford.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce, Research & Development: 1/17/08, 2/05/08[DPS-WM, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6246 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

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

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Holmquist, Ranking Minority Member; King.

Staff: Mac Nicholson (786-7445)

Background: Workers injured in the course of employment may receive various benefits under the Industrial Insurance Act, including payment for medical care directly related to the accident. With limited exceptions, an injured employee will continue to receive Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) benefits until the claim is closed. Claims are generally closed when the injured employee's doctor or another physician certifies that further treatment will not improve the condition, L&I has no information showing further treatment is needed, or the injury was minor and treatment was successful.

Travel costs for health care treatment related to the claim may be reimbursed when the injured worker is required to travel more than ten miles one way from his or her home, no other provider of the same type is available closer to the injured worker's home, and the claim manager has pre-authorized travel.

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.

Mechanical appliances required as permanent equipment after treatment has been completed must continue to be provided or replaced without regard to the date of injury or the date treatment was completed.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee was not considered.

SUMMARY OF BILL (Recommended Substitute): Injured workers must be reimbursed for reasonable travel expenses when travel is required in order to repair, replace, or alter a prosthetic, orthotic, or similar permanent mechanical appliance after closure of the claim.

The reimbursement provisions do not cover travel for the repair or replacement of hearing-aid devices.

Appropriation: None.

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 Substitute Bill: PRO: This bill came from a constituent who had his ankle crushed in an industrial accident and needs special shoes. The case is closed, but the individual has to travel to get fitted for new shoes, incurring transportation costs. The bill will just help cover some of the expenses for individuals needing to travel to get new medical appliances.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Robbie Stern, Washington State Labor Council.