

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1072

As of February 24, 2014

Title: An act relating to the agricultural labor skills and safety grant program.

Brief Description: Creating the agricultural labor skills and safety grant program.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Chandler, Sells, Ormsby, Reykdal, Freeman, Fagan and Morrell).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/14/14, 82-14.

Committee Activity: Commerce & Labor: 2/24/14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: The Department of Commerce (Department) administers a number of programs through its five operating divisions with the goal of "enhancing and promoting sustainable community and economic vitality in Washington."

In recent years, Senate and House bills were introduced to create an agricultural training grant program. Those bills were not enacted; however, funding was provided in the state's operating budget for agricultural training.

In the 2007-09 Operating Budget, \$500,000 was appropriated from the state general fund as pass-through funding to the Opportunities Industrialization Center, a nonprofit organization, to provide training to agricultural workers related to farm skills, English as a second language, and other skills. In the 2009-11 Operating Budget, the Legislature appropriated \$500,000 – \$424,000 from the Accident Account and \$76,000 from the Medical Aid Account – for the implementation of a community agricultural worker safety grant. The Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) was required to enter into an interagency agreement with the Department of Agriculture to implement the grant. The Legislature did not provide funding to L&I for that grant program in the 2011-13 Operating Budget.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature recognizes that providing skills and safety training for agricultural workers helps ensure the workers' success and safety and is of benefit to Washington's agricultural industry.

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.

Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this purpose, the Department must create and administer the Agricultural Labor Skills and Safety Grant Program.

The Department must select one grant recipient that has a community-based organization with the ability to carry out the objectives of the program. The grant recipient must work with agricultural employee and employer organizations to provide workforce skills and safety training to agricultural workers. The grant recipient must:

- design and implement an agricultural skills program and provide health and safety training;
- develop a plan to increase the number of skilled agricultural workers through a recruitment process;
- evaluate trainings and service delivery strategies for agricultural workers and employers;
- partner with an agricultural employee and an employer organization that has focused on agricultural labor and employment issues and services for at least ten years and has experience in providing training to agricultural employees; and
- use a training delivery system that is sensitive to the needs of agricultural employees and employers.

The grant recipient may receive up to \$750,000 per year. The provisions creating the grant program expire July 1, 2017.

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: PRO: This addresses safety training for employees of the largest industry in the state, agriculture. It will improve safety and productivity, and reduce claims. Farm workers experience many injuries. This will enhance their lives. Workers will benefit from training regarding use of pesticides, driving farm equipment, and doing their jobs safely. This is a good investment for the state. It will create a more stable core workforce to hire from and give workers more opportunities. It will help prevent future tragedies.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Gilberto Alvarez, Phyllis Guterrez Kenney, SeaMar; Maria Morfin, farmworker; Mike Gempler, WA Growers League; Patricia Combs, C&H Trucking Academy Inc., C&H Maya Trucking Inc.