

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESB 5524

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government

Title: An act relating to enhancing the employment of persons with disabilities.

Brief Description: Enhancing the employment of persons with disabilities.

Sponsors: Senators Sheldon, Rivers, Parlette, Angel, Bailey, Becker, Warnick, Honeyford, Brown, Dammeier and Conway.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 4/1/15 [DP].

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Requires state agencies with 100 or more employees to file an annual report to the Office of Financial Management regarding information on the number of disabled persons employed.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives S. Hunt, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Minority Member; Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Gregory and Hawkins.

Staff: Sean Flynn (786-7124).

Background:

There are several state programs that address vocational rehabilitation for persons with disabilities. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is an agency within the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) that provides a statewide program of services to disabled persons that support self-sufficiency, job opportunities, and community integration.

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.

The Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) operates the Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Program) to provide services that help blind persons overcome barriers and develop skills necessary for employment and independence. The Program must ensure that the services provided to eligible persons meet the requirements of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

The Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (Governor's Committee) advises the Governor, Legislature, and state agencies on policies affecting people with disabilities. The Governor's Committee also provides awareness and training to promote employment opportunities and awareness of disability issues, and recognizes employers who employ people with disabilities.

In 2013 the Governor issued Executive Order 13-02, which established a goal for state government that by 2017, 5 percent of the state workforce will be comprised of people living with a disability. The Executive Order also directed the Office of Financial Management (OFM) to convene the Disability Employment Task Force to assist state agencies with recruiting and retaining disabled persons, and engage the private sector to help increase opportunities for disabled persons in all employment sectors.

Summary of Bill:

State agencies with 100 or more employees must submit an annual report including the total number of employees in the previous year, including the number of employees classified as disabled. Agency reports also must include:

- the total number employees hired and separated in the past year, including the number of employees hired from the DVR and from the DSB;
- the total number of planned hires for the current year; and
- opportunities for internships for DVR and DSB client placements leading to entry-level positions.

Each agency must submit its report to the OFM human resource director, with copies sent to the director of the DSHS, the DVR, and the Governor's Committee by January 31 of each year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill will help persons with disabilities obtain and keep jobs. It also will help to effectuate the Governor's executive order to increase employment for persons with disabilities. The bill should include the Developmental Disabilities Administration as well.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Lawrence Jacobson; and Seth Dawson, Community Employment Alliance.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.