

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5019

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Agriculture, Water & Rural Economic Development, January 27, 2015

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

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

Sponsors: Senator Honeyford.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water & Rural Economic Development: 1/20/15, 1/27/15 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5019 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Warnick, Chair; Dandel, Vice Chair; Hatfield, Ranking Minority Member; Hobbs and Honeyford.

Staff: Bonnie Kim (786-7316)

Background: The Department of Commerce (Department) administers a number of programs with the goal of "enhancing and promoting sustainable community and economic vitality in Washington." Both Senate and House bills have been introduced in recent years to create an agricultural training grant program. Those bills were not enacted; however, the Legislature provided funding in the state's operating budget for agricultural training.

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

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.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): The Legislature recognizes that providing skills and safety training for agricultural workers, including preparing workers to maintain and safely operate equipment, helps ensure worker success and safety and benefits Washington's agricultural industry. 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 with a community-based organization able to 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;
- 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 employee and employer organizations that have been focused on agricultural labor and employment issues and services for at least ten years and have experience training agricultural employees; and
- use a training delivery system 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, 2018.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY AGRICULTURE, WATER & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Clarifies that skills and safety training for agricultural workers includes preparing workers to maintain and safely operate equipment.

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 Original Bill: PRO: We support the amendment highlighting the need for equipment operation safety training. The bill should focus on Washington workers and an amendment should highlight that resources should be spent on Washington residents or returning seasonal workers. This bill will help train instructors who will train and grow the numbers of knowledgeable workers. This bill will encourage curriculum that is easily accessible to workers.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Honeyford, prime sponsor; Daniel Ford, Columbia Legal Services; Michael Gempler, WA Growers League; Gilbert Alaniz, Seamar Community Health Clinic; David Ducharme, WA State Tree Fruit Assn.