

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5524

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Security, February 19, 2015

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: Government Operations & Security: 2/19/15 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Pearson, Vice Chair; Liias, Ranking Minority Member; Dansel, Habib and McCoy.

Staff: Karen Epps (786-7424)

Background: Governor Inslee issued Executive Order 13-02 in May 2013, relating to improving employment opportunities and outcomes for people with disabilities in state employment. The order directed state government to adopt the goal that by June 30, 2017, 5 percent of the state workforce must be comprised of persons living with a disability. The Office of Financial Management (OFM) must continue to establish new goals until parity is reached with the available workforce. OFM must convene a taskforce to assist state agencies with recruitment and retention of persons with disabilities. The taskforce must provide recommendations to state agencies on how to achieve the employment targets and guidance on recruitment, retention, accommodation, and accessibility for persons with disabilities. Private sector companies must be included to share best practices to boost employment of people with disabilities in all parts of the state.

Each executive cabinet agency, board, and commission must ensure each agency develops an annual employment plan to address underrepresentation of people with disabilities, designate a disability employment coordinator, and participate in the state's supported employment program. OFM must oversee development and implementation of policies, strategies, and services to ensure successful implementation of the executive order. This includes

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developing policies on reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities, training for supervisors and employees, annual employment plans and reports for addressing underrepresentation of people with disabilities, and participation in the supported employment program.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) within the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) assists people with disabilities who want to work but face barriers in finding or keeping a job. DVR provides individualized employment services and counseling to people with disabilities and technical assistance and training to employers about the employment of people with disabilities. DVR services are based on available funds and DVR maintains a waitlist for services. Priority of services are given to those with the most significant disabilities; first priority is given to those individuals with the most significant disabilities, and second priority to individuals with severe disabilities.

Summary of Bill: Agencies employing 100 or more people must submit an annual report to the Human Resources Director at OFM, with copies to DSHS, the Department of Services for the Blind, and the Governor's Committee on Disabilities and Employment. The report must include information from the previous fiscal year, including the number of employees, the number classified as individuals with disabilities, the number of employees that separated from the state agency and the number hired, the number of DVR and Department of Services for the Blind clients who were hired, the number of planned hires for the current fiscal year, and opportunities for DVR and Department of Services for the Blind clients leading to permanent employment.

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: Implementation of the Executive Order has been a good step, but it feels like people at the agencies making hiring decisions do not seem to be catching onto the requirements in the Executive Order. People with disabilities are not even getting interviews. These folks would make great employees. This bill is needed to help people with disabilities. This bill is about measuring how state agencies are doing with making progress in hiring people with disabilities. This bill lays out some parameters that will give the Governor's Office and the Legislature some way to measure baselines and see how agencies are doing.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Sheldon, prime sponsor; Lawrence Jacobson, citizen.