

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6594

As of February 3, 2016

Title: An act relating to improving the safety of young drivers on the road in Washington state through improved traffic safety education and the expansion of current law regarding intermediate licenses.

Brief Description: Expanding requirements for certain driver's license applicants and intermediate license holders.

Sponsors: Senators Liias, Rivers, Fain, Habib and King.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/02/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Kellee Keegan (786-7429)

Background: A person under the age of 18 must meet several conditions to receive a driver's license, including completion of a traffic safety education course.

The traffic safety education course requirement can be met by either completing a course through a licensed driver training school or completing a course offered by a high school. Traffic safety education courses offered by high schools are managed locally through the school districts, and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction oversees and certifies the instructors and curriculum for the programs. Driver training school courses offered privately are licensed and overseen by the Department of Licensing (DOL). A course that is offered by an approved driver training school or a high school must include both classroom instruction and driving experience.

An intermediate license authorizes a person between the ages of 16 and up to age 18 to drive. To receive an intermediate license, an applicant must:

- be a Washington State resident;
- have possessed a valid instruction permit for at least 6 months;
- have passed a driver licensing examination;
- have passed a driver training course;
- present certification the applicant has not been convicted of any traffic violations within six months of their application; and

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- not have been convicted of any alcohol or drug offense while holding their instruction permit.

An intermediate license holder must not drive with anyone, other than a family member, under the age of 20 within the first six months, after which they may carry no more than three passengers that are not member's of their immediate family. The holder of an intermediate license may not operate a motor vehicle between the hours of 1am and 5am unless accompanied by a parent, guardian, or licensed driver over the age of 25. An intermediate license holder may drive without nighttime or passenger restrictions if necessary for agricultural purposes.

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

Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute): Any person between the ages of 18 and 21 who is applying for a Washington State Driver's License for the first time and has not completed a course in traffic safety education must to do so through a licensed driver training school. This would not pertain to individuals under 21 who have held a driver's license from another state for at least one year, completed another driver's training course in another state, or is a member of the armed forces. If there is a demonstrated need, or if the applicant demonstrates they are unable to take the course, certain exemptions may be made.

The driver's permit fee is increased from \$25 to \$30. This fee will create a subsidy program to provide financial assistance to indigent persons required to enroll in a young driver risk prevention traffic safety course. Indigency criteria will be determined by the Department of Licensing in consultation with a statewide organization that represents disadvantaged communities.

The period for which an intermediate license applicant is required to have possessed an instruction permit is expanded from six months to one year. Nighttime driving restriction is extended for intermediate license holders from 9pm to 5am, and intermediate license holders must not carry passengers under the age of 20 who are not members of their immediate family for the first year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 27, 2016.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: None.

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill is the result of recommendations from the Department of Licensing. Motor vehicles crashes are the number one cause of death for young drivers. This would help young drivers become better. Most countries do not allow for drivers under the age of eighteen to driver unsupervised. Young drivers fatalities are increasing. This bill is a big first step.

OTHER: This bill provides a framework for improving safety. An online option would allow for more flexibility to take the course for those under the age of 21.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Marko Lias, sponsor; Dan Coon, AAA Washington/Traffic Safety Programs Manager; Tony Sermoniti, Dept of Licensing.

OTHER: Tom Odegaard, Evergreen Safety Council President/Executive Director.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.