

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 6126

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### As Reported by House Committee On: Labor & Workplace Standards

**Title:** An act relating to requiring completion of an apprenticeship program to receive a journey level electrician certificate of competency.

**Brief Description:** Requiring completion of an apprenticeship program to receive a journey level electrician certificate of competency.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Labor & Commerce (originally sponsored by Senators Saldaña, Hasegawa, Chase, Conway, Zeiger, Keiser and Kuderer).

#### **Brief History:**

##### **Committee Activity:**

Labor & Workplace Standards: 2/19/18, 2/22/18 [DPA].

#### **Brief Summary of Substitute Bill (As Amended by Committee)**

- Requires completion of an apprenticeship program to obtain a journey level electrician certificate beginning July 1, 2023.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKPLACE STANDARDS

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Sells, Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Doglio and Frame.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives McCabe, Ranking Minority Member; Pike, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Manweller.

**Staff:** Joan Elgee (786-7106).

#### **Background:**

An electrical contractor license is required to engage in the business of installing or maintaining wires or equipment to convey electric current, or equipment to be operated by electric current. To work as an electrician, an individual must have a journey level or

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specialty electrician certificate of competency. The Department of Labor and Industries (Department) issues licenses and certificates of competency and otherwise administers the regulation of electricians and electrical work.

To obtain certification as a journey level electrician, an individual must work in the electrical construction trade for at least 8,000 hours to take the required examination, and meet classroom training requirements. The required work experience hours to qualify to take a specialty examination are either 4,000 or 2,000 hours, depending on the specialty. If the specialty requires 2,000 hours, those hours may not be credited towards the 8,000 hour requirement for the journey level certificate. The Department permits applicants to credit work experience obtained for a 4,000 hour specialty towards the journey level certificate.

Alternatively, an individual may qualify to take the examination by completing an apprenticeship program approved by the Washington Apprenticeship and Training Council. In addition, an applicant who has completed a two-year program at a community or technical college or technical or trade school may substitute up to two years of the school program for two years of work experience. Training in the electrical construction trade in the military may also be credited as work experience. To obtain the required work experience, trainees must work under the supervision of a certified electrician.

The Department may enter a reciprocal agreement with another state to accept the credentials of the other state if the requirements are equal to Washington's standards.

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### **Summary of Amended Bill:**

Beginning July 1, 2023, applicants for a journey level electrician certificate must have completed an apprenticeship program to take the examination. The apprenticeship program may be one approved by the Washington Apprenticeship and Training Council or an equivalent apprenticeship program approved by the Department. Trainees in an approved equivalent journey level apprenticeship program may work in the state under supervision.

Until July 1, 2025, the Department may permit an applicant to take the journey level examination if the applicant establishes that the applicant has the equivalent training and experience and good cause for not completing the minimum hours of work on July 1, 2023.

The Department's practice of allowing work experience obtained for a 4,000 hour specialty to be credited towards apprenticeship requirements for a journey level certificate is codified.

### **Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:**

The amended bill added language to permit trainees in an equivalent apprenticeship program to work under supervision.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Amended Bill:** The bill takes effect July 1, 2023.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) This bill will help the construction trade with the shortage of trainees. The electrical workforce is aging and trainees are having trouble getting their work hours. Trainees would be able to count hours worked in Oregon. The bill will help border areas by getting licensed electricians from bordering states. The bill allows for reciprocity and a trans state regional workforce, under which contractors will be able to compete for business in Oregon.

Apprenticeships improve safety for workers and have a huge return on investment. The industry pays for the apprenticeship model of training. Unlike with other training programs, apprentices do not have problems having their hours submitted. The bill will not harm small contractors because they typically do not have journey level electricians.

(Opposed) This bill eliminates the trainee path, at a time when more electricians are needed. Apprenticeships require 144 hours per year in classroom work, which means apprentices spend 18 Saturdays a year away from their families. People with other commitments cannot go to school in the evenings and on the weekends. The bill would mean that a parent, for example, cannot train their child. Opportunities in the rural areas would not be available. Small electrical companies do some commercial work. The education required in 2007 addressed the low test score problem. Creating an apprenticeship program is very difficult.

(Other) The bill could limit avenues for training. Perhaps a study makes sense so an informed decision can be made.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Senator Saldaña, prime sponsor; Timothy O'Donnell, International Brotherhood of Electricians Local 76, Stephen Harper, Southwest Washington Electrical Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee; Brent Luderman, National Electrical Contractors Association; and Helene Sigmund, Construction Industry Training Council.

(Opposed) Nathan Turner and Michael Curley, Washington State Electrical Contractors Association; and Tena Risley, Northwest Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Association and Training Center.

(Other) Tom Kwieciak, Building Industry Association of Washington.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.