

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6521

As of January 31, 2018

Title: An act relating to unemployment compensation for musicians.

Brief Description: Concerning unemployment compensation for musicians.

Sponsors: Senators Saldaña, Keiser and Hasegawa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor & Commerce: 1/31/18.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides that for certain musicians, the required hours of covered employment for unemployment insurance eligibility is 504 hours rather than 680 hours.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & COMMERCE

Staff: Jarrett Sacks (786-7448)

Background: An individual performing services in employment is eligible to receive unemployment benefits if the individual:

- worked at least 680 hours in covered employment in the individual's base year;
- was separated from employment through no fault of the individual's own or quit work for good cause; and
- is able to work and is actively searching for suitable work.

The base year is generally the first four of the last five completed calendar quarters before the claimant applied for benefits. Eligible unemployed workers receive benefits based on wages received in the base year. The Employment Security Department administers unemployment insurance.

Some services are not services in employment and are not covered, such as services that meet an independent contractor test. For musicians and entertainers, services performed under a written contract with a purchaser for a specific engagement when the musician or entertainer performs no other duties and is not regularly and continuously employed by the purchaser are

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.

not services in employment. However, a musician or entertainer who performs for a music or entertainment business, or as a member of a music or entertainment group, is an employee of the business or group. A music or entertainment business or group is an employer whose principal business activity is music or entertainment. The term does not include entities who provide music or entertainment to members or patrons incidental to their principal business activity and does not include an individual employing musicians or entertainers on a casual basis.

Summary of Bill: For claims filed on or after January 5, 2020, a musician who earns at least 75 percent of their base year wages as an employee of a music or entertainment business, or as a member of a music or entertainment group, must have worked at least 504 hours, rather than 680 hours, in covered employment in the musician's base year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 5, 2020.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: It is difficult to make a living as a musician and this bill gives them some stability. Since musicians work three hours a day and sometimes work on call, it is difficult for a musician to meet the current hours required for eligibility. Sometimes musicians work many jobs at once and still cannot qualify. The current system works for traditional jobs, but does not work as well for unconventional occupations.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Rebecca Saldaña, Prime Sponsor; Olivia Hamilton, American Federation of Musicians; Christopher Jones, American Federation of Musicians; Jay Easton, American Federation of Musicians; Motter Snell, American Federation of Musicians.

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