

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6584

As of January 31, 2018

Title: An act relating to the motion picture competitiveness program.

Brief Description: Concerning the motion picture competitiveness program.

Sponsors: Senators Hasegawa, Chase and Saldaña.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Economic Development & International Trade: 2/01/18 [DPF].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Eliminates a funding assistance preference for additional seasons of television series that have previously qualified for funding assistance under the Motion Picture Competitiveness Program.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Staff: Alex Fairfortune (786-7416)

Background: The Legislature created the Motion Picture Competitiveness Program (program) in 2002 with the intent of maintaining Washington's position as a competitive location for filming motion pictures, television, and commercials. Under the program, qualifying production companies that film in Washington can apply for financial assistance to pay for production and postproduction costs.

Washington Filmworks, a nonprofit corporation, processes the production companies' applications for financial assistance. The Washington Filmworks Board of Directors must evaluate and award financial assistance based on criteria established by the Department of Commerce. In establishing the criteria, the Department of Commerce must consider 11 factors, including giving preference to additional seasons of television series that have previously qualified for funding assistance.

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: When establishing funding assistance criteria, the Department of Commerce no longer must give preference to additional seasons of television series that have previously qualified for funding assistance.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: In Washington tax incentives are a chief economic development strategy, so we should make sure that they are accomplishing economic development goals. There is currently a problem with the way the Motion Picture Competitiveness Program is being administered. For the past several years there has only been one project that has been the beneficiary of the entire incentive amount. Washington FilmWorks has a board member from the production that is the beneficiary of the money awarded. There needs to be an administrative fix so that people that are not on the board have a good shot at getting the incentive. This bill simply removes one barrier and provides an intent section to offer guidance on how the film incentive should be structured.

CON: Filmworks agrees that the foundation for a sustainable film industry is homegrown local talent. To support that, Filmworks has launched the innovation lab designed to support Washington filmmakers, and filmmakers using emerging technologies, and is developing a Washington filmmaker incentive for the standard program. Every year Filmworks funds multiple projects. Like any nonprofit organization, board members are leaders in the community that have been working professionals. Because of that, Filmworks has put into place some of the highest ethical standards for its conflict of interest policy. Any board member that could potentially have a conflict must recuse themselves from any discussion on a project or any vote on funding.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Hasegawa, Prime Sponsor.

CON: Amy Lillard, Executive Director, Washington Filmworks.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.