
Education Committee

HB 1585

Brief Description: Improving driver's education related to traffic stops in order to avoid inadvertent hostile confrontations.

Sponsors: Representatives Graham and Jacobsen.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Mandates the inclusion of information about driver-law enforcement interactions in the traffic safety education curriculum used by school districts and private schools.
- Requires the Washington State Patrol (WSP), the Department of Licensing, and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop and maintain a curriculum that includes driver-law enforcement interactive training with best practices for when a driver is detained by a law enforcement officer.
- Directs the WSP to provide on its website at least one public information video and written steps providing the best actions drivers can take when they are detained for a traffic infraction.

Hearing Date: 1/28/22

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

Traffic Safety Education Curriculum.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Department of Licensing (DOL) are required to jointly develop and maintain a required curriculum for school districts and approved private schools operating a traffic safety education program. The DOL must provide

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each qualifying applicant for an instructor's license or a driver training school license with a copy of the curriculum.

In addition to information on the safe, lawful, and responsible operation of motor vehicles, the required curriculum must include information on specified topics, examples of which include:

- the effects of alcohol and drug use on motor vehicle operators, including information on drug and alcohol related traffic injury and mortality rates and the current penalties for driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol;
- motorcycle awareness, to ensure new operators of motor vehicles have been instructed in the importance of safely sharing the road with motorcyclists; and
- bicycle and pedestrian safety, to ensure that operators of motor vehicles have been instructed in the importance of safely sharing the road with bicyclists and pedestrians.

Washington State Patrol.

Established in 1921, the Washington State Patrol (WSP) has numerous duties and responsibilities prescribed in statute, including having its chief and officers exercise police powers and duties throughout the state. The WSP also oversees traffic law enforcement and vehicle equipment standards, patrols and enforces laws on state roadways, and provides security and protection for the governor and the Legislature. The WSP also conducts non-highway related activities related to crime labs, crime scene investigations, centralized criminal records, fire protection, toxicology, and forensic services.

Department of Licensing.

The DOL administers laws relating to the licensing and regulation of professions, businesses, and other activities in addition to administering laws relating to the licensing and regulation of vehicles and vehicle operators, dealers, and manufacturers.

Summary of Bill:

Instructional Requirements.

The traffic safety education curriculum used by school districts and private schools operating a traffic safety education program must include information on driver-law enforcement interactive training for the purpose of preventing hostile and life-threatening interactions related to traffic enforcement actions.

The WSP, the DOL, and the OSPI must develop and maintain a curriculum that includes driver-law enforcement interactive training with best practices for when a driver is detained by a law enforcement officer in common situations related to driving.

The curriculum must explain the rights and responsibilities drivers have when they are detained by law enforcement for traffic infractions or driving under the influence of liquor, cannabis, or drugs. The curriculum must address differences in expectations of law enforcement officers caused by:

- the time of day or night and available light;

- weather conditions;
- the location of the interaction (interstate, urban, rural); and
- any common circumstances that could cause law enforcement officers to draw weapons or use force.

Training should include discussions with drivers regarding scenarios that have resulted in the use of force or weapons being drawn by officers, and ways to avoid similar situations.

If a training course involves driving students operating a vehicle or using driving simulations, the course should include at least one activity where the students undergo a simulation of being detained by law enforcement for a violation of the rules of the road.

Washington State Patrol Website Postings.

By December 1, 2022, the WSP must provide on its website at least one public information video and written steps providing the best actions drivers can take when they are detained for a traffic infraction. The stated intent of the materials is to prevent drivers from inadvertently taking actions that patrol officers may view as threatening, and to provide drivers with a comprehensive understanding of the process that occurs during a traffic stop.

The WSP must notify county sheriffs when the video and written materials are posted on its website. The WSP is encouraged to share the information broadly with law enforcement agencies, associations, high schools, and driver education organizations.

The website related requirements of the WSP expire December 31, 2022.

Upon posting of the materials by the WSP, county sheriffs are encouraged to provide a link to the materials on their office website or provide public information in video or written forms about the best actions drivers can take when they are detained for a traffic infraction.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 20, 2022.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.