

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## ESSB 5599

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

**Title:** An act relating to journey level electrician certifications of competency.

**Brief Description:** Concerning journey level electrician certifications of competency.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Labor, Commerce & Tribal Affairs (originally sponsored by Senators Saldaña, Keiser, Conway, Das, Hasegawa, Lias, Nobles and Wilson, C.).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Labor & Workplace Standards: 2/22/22, 2/23/22 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill**

- Modifies the eligibility requirements for journey level electrician certificate of competency exams.
- Requires the Department of Labor and Industries to make recommendations, conduct outreach, and offer assistance on compliance with the new eligibility requirements.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKPLACE STANDARDS

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Sells, Chair; Berry, Vice Chair; Bronoske and Ortiz-Self.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Hoff, Ranking Minority Member; Mosbrucker, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Harris.

**Staff:** Lily Smith (786-7175).

**Background:**

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

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 (01) or specialty electrician certificate of competency. The Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) issues licenses and certificates of competency and administers the regulation of electricians and electrical work.

Until July 1, 2023, 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. An applicant may substitute up to two years of certain school programs for two years of work experience. Training in the electrical construction trade in the military may also be credited as work experience. Alternatively, an individual may qualify to take the examination by completing an apprenticeship program approved by the Washington Apprenticeship and Training Council.

Beginning July 1, 2023, applicants for a journey level electrician certificate must have completed an approved apprenticeship program to take the required examination. As part of the apprenticeship, the applicant must have worked in the electrical construction trade for at least 8,000 hours, 4,000 of which must be in electrical installations in industrial or commercial facilities under supervision. An applicant may substitute up to two years of certain school programs for two years of work experience under an apprenticeship. Training in the electrical construction trade in the military may also be credited as work experience under an apprenticeship.

From July 1, 2023, until July 1, 2025, the L&I may permit an applicant who obtained experience and training equivalent to a journey level apprenticeship program to take the examination if the applicant had good cause for not completing the minimum hours of work.

The L&I 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 Bill:**

Beginning July 1, 2023, to be eligible for the examination for a journey level certificate of competency, an applicant must have:

- successfully completed the work experience and education requirements of an approved 8,000-hour electrical construction trade apprenticeship program. Of the 8,000 hours, 4,000 must be in new electrical installations in industrial or commercial facilities under supervision;
- successfully completed an 8,000-hour electrical construction trade apprenticeship program in another jurisdiction equivalent to an apprenticeship program approved in Washington, 4,000 hours of which must be new electrical installations in industrial or

- commercial facilities;
- 16,000 hours of experience in electrical construction trade installing and maintaining electrical wiring and equipment in another jurisdiction, 8,000 hours of which must be new electrical installations in industrial or commercial facilities; or
- 8,000 hours of experience in the electrical construction trade while serving in a construction battalion in the armed forces of the United States.

The provision allowing the L&I, from July 1, 2023, until July 1, 2025, to permit an applicant who obtained equivalent training and experience to a journey level apprenticeship program to take the examination if the applicant establishes good cause, is repealed.

By October 31, 2022, the L&I must make recommendations to the Legislature on potential solutions and incentives to help rural electrical contractors come into compliance with apprenticeship standards, including adequate electrical apprenticeship capacity. When developing the recommendations, the L&I, or its electrical standards subcommittee, must allow for input from interested parties, including rural electrical contractors. The L&I must also allow for public comment on its final recommendations.

The L&I must conduct an outreach program to educate employers and electrical trainees about the changes to the requirements for journey level electrician certification and offer technical assistance to employers and training agents to increase apprenticeship capacity for interested electrical trainees to meet the new requirements.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except section 1, relating to eligibility for journey level electrician certificate of competency exams, which takes effect July 1, 2023.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) This bill would rescue stranded hours for certain trainees caused by the passage of a previous bill, and provide welcome relief to electrician training partners. It would also recognize experience hours earned by members of the military.

(Opposed) This will directly impact the pay and licensing of many electrical workers. Many shops do a variety of work, so having one kind of license does not mean an electrical worker will only do that kind of work, as most have a broad spectrum of skills. This bill will create a ceiling for certain electricians, which means homeowners and businesses will have fewer choices in hiring. These requirements will effect more than just commercial buildings, as mixed-use buildings are considered commercial for this purpose. Education is

important, but so is access to that education. Previous legislation simplified the process, but there is limited availability for training, and this will gut the trade going forward. There should be an exception for trainees midway through the process that could be forced to start over, or a delay until there are enough apprenticeship programs. Additional time should continue to be granted in light of the pandemic. It is very difficult to get approved as an apprenticeship program. This bill effectively creates a training monopoly and benefits unions, and disproportionately harms rural areas and small businesses.

(Other) There are real concerns about equitable access to training for rural electricians. New regulations pose an existential threat to businesses, and may make it nearly impossible for current trainees to comply with these requirements within their regions. Workers will leave these areas as a result. The bill should require the creation of opportunities in these rural areas, such as through a local pilot program.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Senator Rebecca Saldaña, prime sponsor; Halene Sigmund, Construction Industry Training Council of Washington; and Matthew Hepner, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and Certified Electrical Workers of Washington.

(Opposed) Adam Kemly, Kemly Electric; Michael Brunelle, First Choice Electric; Winona Furgison, Shocking Difference LLC; Sophia Steele, Associated Builders and Contractors; Robert Perasso; Brandon Perasso; Kyle Belton; and Nathan Turner.

(Other) Kate Dean, Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners.

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