

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5599

As Passed Senate, February 15, 2022

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, Commerce & Tribal Affairs: 1/13/22, 2/02/22 [DPS, DNP, w/oRec].

Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 2/15/22, 29-20.

Brief Summary of Engrossed First Substitute Bill

- Modifies the requirement that an applicant, in order to be eligible to take the journey level electrical examination, complete an approved electrical construction apprenticeship program, or an equivalent apprenticeship program, to a requirement that the applicant complete the work experience and education requirements of an 8000 hour electrical construction apprenticeship program.
- Adds provisions allowing for applicants who complete an 8000 hour electrical apprenticeship program in another jurisdiction or have 16,000 hours of experience in the electrical construction trade in another jurisdiction to be eligible for the journey level electrical examination.
- Adds a provision allowing applicants with 8000 hours of experience in the electrical construction trade while serving in a construction battalion in the armed forces to be eligible for the journey level electrical examination.
- Requires the Department of Labor and Industries to make recommendations on potential solutions and incentives to help rural

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electrical contractors come into compliance with apprenticeship standards.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5599 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Keiser, Chair; Conway, Vice Chair, Labor; Stanford, Vice Chair, Commerce & Tribal Affairs; Robinson and Saldaña.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Braun.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators King, Ranking Member; Rivers.

Staff: Jarrett Sacks (786-7448)

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 (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.

In 2018, the Legislature passed SSB 6126, which requires completion of an apprenticeship program to receive a journey level electrician certificate of competency beginning July 1, 2023. The bill also allowed L&I, until 2025, to 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.

Summary of Engrossed First Substitute Bill: 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 8000 hour electrical construction trade apprenticeship program—of the 8000 hours, 4000 must be in new electrical installations in industrial or commercial facilities under supervision;
- successfully completed an 8000 hour electrical construction trade apprenticeship program in another jurisdiction equivalent to an apprenticeship program approved in Washington, 4000 hours of which must be new electrical installations in industrial or commercial facilities;

- 16,000 hours experience in electrical construction trade installing and maintaining electrical wiring and equipment in another jurisdiction, 8000 hours of which must be new electrical installations in industrial or commercial facilities; or
- 8000 hours of experience in the electrical construction trade while serving in a construction battalion in the armed forces of the United States.

The provision, set to take effect in 2023, that allows L&I, 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 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, L&I, or its electrical standards subcommittee, must allow for input from interested parties, including rural electrical contractors, at no fewer than two meetings. L&I must also allow for public comment on its final recommendations.

L&I must conduct an outreach program to educate employers and electrical trainees about the changes to the requirements for the journey level electrician certification taking effect on July 1, 2023 and offer technical assistance to employers and training agents to increase apprenticeship capacity for interested electrical trainees to meet the new requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Effective Date: The bill contains multiple effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: This bill makes technical fixes to the bill that passed in 2018. There is a need to develop capacity for the bill and L&I has a work group to build that capacity. The bill only applies to journey level licenses and will solve the issue of stranded hours. The new options for certification are good, but it is not enough to solve the shortage of available programs. The bill also clarifies the requirements for using out of state hours and experience in the military towards certification.

CON: There are a lack of approved apprenticeship programs in areas and there are no remote learning opportunities. It takes a long time and a lot of money to start a program. There was no need to change the system to apprenticeship only, because businesses have been training electricians the previous way for decades and there was already classroom instruction offered by L&I.

OTHER: The Legislature should not force apprenticeships on people when there is already a pathway. The goal should be to expand apprenticeships, not require them. It is now extremely expensive to train trainees.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Rebecca Saldaña, Prime Sponsor; Kate Dean, Commissioner, Jefferson County; Hans Frederickson, Frederickson Electric; Halene Sigmund, CITC of WA; Matthew Hepner, IBEW/ceww.

CON: Robert Perasso.

OTHER: Jordan Penhollow; BRANDON PERASSO; PAUL BRIGANTI, WASHINGTON ELECTRICAL CEU LLC.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: OTHER: Tammy Fellin, Labor & Industries.