

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1726

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to the director of fire protection's administration and reimbursement of fire service-related training programs.

Brief Description: Concerning the director of fire protection's administration and reimbursement of fire service-related training programs.

Sponsors: Representatives Bronoske, Robertson, Griffey, Rule, Leavitt, Schmidt, Chapman, Ryu, Reeves, Graham, Ormsby, Paul and Reed; by request of Washington State Patrol.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Relations: 2/14/23, 2/17/23 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 1/17/24, 97-0.

Passed Senate: 2/28/24, 49-0.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Removes the method for calculating reimbursement rates for Firefighter 1 training expenses of public fire agencies that do not use the training services of the Fire Training Academy.
- Provides that such reimbursement is instead provided in accordance with rules established by the Director of Fire Protection.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL RELATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Ramos, Chair; Stearns, Vice Chair; Abbarno, Ranking Minority Member; Christian, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Gregerson, Low and Mena.

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.

Staff: Jason Zolle (786-7124).

Background:

Since 1995, state policy relating to fire protection has been under the jurisdiction of the Washington State Patrol (WSP). The Director of Fire Protection (Director), also known as the State Fire Marshal, is appointed by the Chief of the WSP. The Director has a number of statutory duties, which include preparing a biennial budget for fire protection services. The Director is also required to provide instructional programs for fire service training in conjunction with schools, colleges, state agencies, and local governments. The Fire Training Academy (Academy), also under the Director's supervision, provides basic firefighter training to all city fire departments, fire protection districts, regional fire protection service authorities, and other public fire agencies (collectively, PFAs).

Instead of receiving training and testing services from the Academy, PFAs may seek reimbursement for their Firefighter 1 training expenses. Firefighter 1 is a training program that all new recruits begin with, providing both classroom education and practical skills. The amount of reimbursement is calculated on a per capita basis equal to the three-year statewide firefighter per capita average for the regional direct delivery of training by the Academy. This amount is calculated by dividing the number of firefighters trained using that program by the total cost. The amount of reimbursement may not, however, be less than \$3 per hour of training. Reimbursement is capped at 200 hours.

Summary of Bill:

The method for calculating reimbursement rates is removed, and reimbursement is instead provided in accordance with rules established by the Director. The WSP, through the Director, is given the authority to adopt such rules.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This is agency-request legislation intended to help better deliver regional firefighter training. This bill allows more flexibility in delivery to reach more rural districts. Volunteer firefighters still need to earn a paycheck; they must have the best training possible to keep them and the public safe. Regional direct delivery has had a positive impact on communities, but the program must be properly funded.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Dan Bronoske, prime sponsor; Ray Lamoureux, Washington Fire Chiefs Association; and Scott Cooper, North Mason Regional Fire Authority.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.