

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1986

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**As Passed House:**

February 6, 2024

**Title:** An act relating to adding purposes for the use of existing firefighter safety funding.

**Brief Description:** Adding purposes for the use of existing firefighter safety funding.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Abbarno, Bronoske, Berry, Schmidt, Ramel, Reed, Graham, Timmons, Lekanoff, Reeves, Nance, Riccelli, Wylie and Hackney; by request of Department of Labor & Industries.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Labor & Workplace Standards: 1/17/24, 1/24/24 [DP].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed House: 2/6/24, 97-0.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Allows the Department of Labor and Industries to grant funds to employers of firefighters participating in the Firefighter Injury and Illness Reduction Grant Program, to be used for safety training and assessments.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKPLACE STANDARDS

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Berry, Chair; Fosse, Vice Chair; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Bronoske, Doglio, Ormsby, Ortiz-Self, Rude and Ybarra.

**Staff:** Trudes Tango (786-7384).

**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.*

Under the state's Industrial Insurance Act, a worker who, in the course of employment, is injured or suffers disability from an occupational disease is entitled to certain benefits. Employers must obtain industrial insurance either through the State Fund administered by the Department of Labor and Industries (Department), or, if qualified, may self-insure. For certain firefighters, there is a presumption that certain medical conditions are occupational diseases. Those conditions are respiratory disease, certain heart problems, specified cancers, and infectious diseases.

In 2019 the Legislature directed the Department to establish best practices to improve safety and health outcomes for firefighters, including best practices for a proactive health and safety risk management system to reduce the risk of injuries and illness, especially related to compensable workers' compensation claims. Employers of firefighters who implement the best practices may be eligible for an industrial insurance premium discount. The Department may provide funding, up to 2 percent of the premiums paid in the prior year from the risk classes for firefighters, to provide funds for State Fund employers of firefighters to purchase additional equipment and other gear needed to follow the best practices.

Based on this legislation, the Department, in consultation with firefighters and employers of firefighters, established the Firefighter Injury and Illness Reduction (FIIRE) program.

**Summary of Bill:**

The purposes for which FIIRE grant funds may be used are expanded. The Department may grant funds to eligible State Fund employers of firefighters to be used for assessments or training related to safety culture or other safety intervention activities.

**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) There are about 65 jurisdictions that receive grant funding to buy equipment. This bill would allow those jurisdictions to use funds for safety assessments and to promote safety culture. It will boost compliance with safety procedures.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Peter Abbarno, prime sponsor; and Dave Bonauto, Department of Labor and Industries.

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