
Finance Committee

SB 5897

Brief Description: Modifying provisions of the business licensing service program.

Sponsors: Senators Mullet and Wilson, L.; by request of Department of Revenue.

<p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Makes changes to business licensing fees.

Hearing Date: 2/15/24

Staff: Tracey Taylor (786-7152).

Background:

Business Licensing.

A business must register with the Department of Revenue (Department) if:

- The business requires city, county, and state endorsements.
- The business owner is using a name other than their full legal name.
- The business plans to hire employees within the next 90 days.
- The business sells a product or provides a service that requires the collection of sales tax.
- The business' gross income is \$12,000 per year or more.
- The business is required to pay taxes or fees to the Department.
- The business buys or processes specialty wood products.
- The business meets nexus threshold reporting requirements.

There are various fees imposed on business licenses: a handling fee that cannot exceed \$90 is due with each business license application to open or reopen a business, up to a \$10 fee to renew a business license, and up to a \$19 fee for a business license application filed for any other reason. Handling fees must be reduced if the balance in the Business Licensing

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Account exceeds or is projected to exceed \$1 million at the end of the next fiscal year.

The current fees are: \$50 to open or reopen a business, \$5 to renew a license, and \$10 for any other purpose.

City Business Licensing.

Approximately 230 of Washington's 281 cities require a business license for any business conducting business activities within the city. The Business Licensing Service (BLS) within the Department is the state clearinghouse for business licensing. Through the BLS, the Department facilitates the issuance of local business licenses on behalf of 118 cities.

Municipalities retain full regulatory control over their registration and compliance requirements.

Fees associated with business licenses vary from flat rate charges to fees based on factors including employee count, square footage occupied, or business type. Any changes to the fees charged must be sent to the Department at least 75 days prior to the effective date of the change.

Summary of Bill:

If, during the Department's annual review, the balance of the Business Licensing Account exceeds or is projected to exceed a three-month average of operating expenses from the Business Licensing Account in the previous fiscal year, then the Department must reduce the business licensing fees.

If a city that issues licenses through the BLS enacts a change that only affects the amount of the fee for the issuance or renewal of the license, that change takes effect no sooner than 10 days after the Department receives notice of the change.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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