

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1458

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Labor & Commerce, March 14, 2023

Title: An act relating to unemployment insurance benefits for individuals participating in an apprenticeship program.

Brief Description: Concerning unemployment insurance benefits for apprenticeship program participants.

Sponsors: House Committee on Labor & Workplace Standards (originally sponsored by Representatives Shavers, Fosse, Santos, Berry, Simmons, Alvarado, Doglio, Ormsby, Gregerson and Pollet).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/28/23, 86-11.

Committee Activity: Labor & Commerce: 3/13/23, 3/14/23 [DP, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Employment Security Department to convene a work group for the purpose of identifying and addressing legal and procedural barriers faced by eligible claimants participating in apprenticeship programs.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & COMMERCE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Keiser, Chair; Conway, Vice Chair; Saldaña, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Member; MacEwen, Robinson and Stanford.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Braun and Schoesler.

Staff: Jarrett Sacks (786-7448)

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.

Background: An unemployed individual is eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits (UI benefits) if the individual (1) worked at least 680 hours in the base year, (2) was separated from employment through no fault of the claimant's or quit work for good cause, and (3) is able to work, available to work, and is actively searching for suitable work. The Employment Security Department (ESD) administers Washington State's unemployment insurance program.

Individuals who leave work to enter certain apprenticeship programs are considered to have left work for good cause and, therefore, are not disqualified from receiving UI benefits. The apprenticeship program must be approved by the Washington State Apprenticeship Training Council. Benefits are payable beginning the Sunday of the week prior to the week in which the claimant begins active participation in the apprenticeship program. These UI benefits are not charged to employers' experience rating accounts.

Summary of Bill: ESD is required to convene a work group for the purpose of identifying and addressing legal and procedural barriers faced by eligible claimants participating in apprenticeship programs when those claimants seek timely access to UI benefits. The work group must include representatives of apprenticeship programs and ESD staff, as well as other appropriate stakeholders identified by ESD.

By December 1, 2023, ESD must submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature with findings and recommendations, including a status update on applicable administrative efforts to reduce procedural barriers identified by the work group.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Apprentices face hurdles in acquiring UI benefits when they leave work for supplemental instruction, which can discourage participation in apprenticeship programs and progress through programs. The work group dives into procedural barriers to allow apprentices to pursue supplemental classroom education. There is difficulty receiving benefits for the time they leave work for supplemental instruction and some give up out of frustration. Apprentices rely on UI to support their families. The report will highlight policy barriers to help advocate for changes at federal level.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Clyde Shavers, Prime Sponsor; Erin Frasier, Washington State Building & Construction Trades Council; Heather Kurtenbach, Ironworkers L 86; Andrew Vander Stoep, IBEW 191.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.