

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1726

As of February 15, 2024

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

Committee Activity: State Government & Elections: 2/15/24.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Removes the method for calculating reimbursement rate for Firefighter I training expenses of public fire agencies that do not use the training services of the Washington State Patrol Fire Training Academy.
- Provides such reimbursement instead in accordance with rules established by the Director of Fire Protection.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

Staff: Danielle Creech (786-7412)

Background: The Director of Fire Protection (Director), also known as the State Fire Marshal, is appointed by the Chief of the Washington State Patrol (WSP). The Director has a number of statutory duties, including but not limited to:

- the preparation of a biennial budget for fire protection services;
- the development and adoption of a master plan for constructing, equipping, maintaining, and operating necessary fire service training and education facilities; and

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- the development and adoption of a plan for the WSP Fire Training Academy (Academy) to deliver basic firefighter training and testing to all city fire departments, fire protection districts, regional fire protection service authorities, and other public fire agencies in the state.

Instead of receiving training and testing services from the Academy, city fire departments, fire protection districts, regional fire protection service authorities, and other public fire agencies in the state may seek reimbursement for their Firefighter I training expenses. Firefighter I 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 under that program by the total cost. The amount of reimbursement may not, however, be less than \$3 per hour of training, and 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.

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: This bill is intended to increase our ability to expand the regional direct delivery program across the state to target rural communities that are underserved by existing training programs. Hopefully this will get more firefighters up to the basic Firefighter I standard. The regional direct delivery is very important because rural areas do not have the budget to put into the training to meet today's standards. This will help us bring in outside instructors to ensure our firefighters meet current standards.

Persons Testifying: PRO: State Fire Marshal, Chad Cross, Washington State Patrol; Andrew Shaffran, WA St Fire Fighters' Association (Volunteers').

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