

HB 1896 - DIGEST

Finds that: (1) Washington's combination of excellent wages, working conditions, and services have attracted workers from other states and countries to work in our agricultural, construction, retail, restaurant, and hospitality industries;

(2) A controversy exists because some of these workers may lack employment eligibility;

(3) Considerable controversy has occurred over eligibility for government services; and

(4) The federal government is encouraging employers to conduct background investigations or use other systems to verify the identity of workers after hiring them, but these steps are not required by federal law, take several weeks to accomplish, and are not feasible for many employers.

Declares an intent for our state to proactively work with the federal government to establish a program to provide an adequate, legal, and stable workforce for employers in Washington.

Requires the employment security department, on behalf of the state, to petition the United States congress to create a new classification of nonimmigrant visa.

Establishes the Washington state essential worker pilot program.

Directs the employment security department to immediately begin work to establish the parameters of the program and to implement the program.

Requires employers to provide housing to essential workers while they are employed.

Requires the employment security department to offer training programs for essential workers, including but not limited to basic English language and civics training.

Expires December 1, 2013.