

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2450

As Reported by House Committee On:
Early Learning & Human Services

Title: An act relating to enhancing the employment of persons with disabilities.

Brief Description: Concerning employment of persons with disabilities.

Sponsors: Representatives Haigh, MacEwen, S. Hunt, Santos and Freeman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Human Services: 1/30/14, 2/3/14 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires state agencies employing 30 or more people to submit an annual report to the Human Resources Director, the Director of the Department of Social and Health Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Governor's Committee on Disabilities and Employment outlining employment statistics related to individuals with disabilities.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Freeman, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Fagan, Goodman, MacEwen, Ortiz-Self, Roberts, Sawyer, Senn, Young and Zeiger.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Scott, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Luke Wickham (786-7146).

Background:

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) provides services to individuals who want to work but need assistance due to a physical, sensory, cognitive, or mental disability. A DVR counselor will work with an

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individual to create a customized plan to achieve his or her job goal. The DVR provides counseling and guidance, counselors for the deaf and hard of hearing, assessment services, benefit planning, independent living services, assistive technology services, training and education, and job-related services.

The DVR internship program matches a DVR customer with an employer in the desired field of the customer. The specific length and setting of an internship are determined by agreement between a DVR customer, a DVR counselor, and a host employer. Host employers provide a paid internship for a DVR customer by hiring him or her as a temporary employee and DVR reimburses the employer for all salary and related costs.

Summary of Bill:

State agencies employing 30 or more people must submit a report to the Human Resources Director, with copies to the Director of the DSHS of the DVR, and the Governor's Committee on Disabilities and Employment by January 31 of each year.

This report must include the following:

- the number of employees from the previous year;
- the number of employees classified as individuals with disabilities;
- the number of employees that separated from the state agency the previous year;
- the number of employees that were hired by the state agency the previous year;
- the number of employees hired from a DVR program the previous year;
- planned hires for the current year; and
- opportunities for internships for a DVR client placement leading to an entry-level position.

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) All people have disabilities, some just have more than others. Individuals with disabilities will never come to the top of the list of potential hires, and this bill will help bring attention to this issue to encourage state agencies to hire individuals with disabilities. The state should be the example instead of relying on the private sector to offer employment. The federal government has a Schedule A program. There aren't as many jobs individuals with disabilities can apply for. It is important to encourage self-advocacy for individuals with disabilities and awareness among employers. There are many individuals with disabilities who have high-level, transferrable skills. It is important for state agencies to be more aware

about these issues. This bill would help employ individuals with disabilities. The largest barrier that employees with disabilities face is moving up the chain. It is unclear if agencies are reporting this data. Persons with blindness should be included in this bill. Supported employees often have a difficult time advancing. It is not that employers do not want to hire individuals with disabilities, but its difficult for employers to understand how individuals will carry out those jobs. Individuals with disabilities should be hired on as legislative staff. Individuals with disabilities are not required to disclose their disability.

(Neutral) The state does track some of these employment statistics. The threshold for tracking this data is currently higher than the number required in the bill, around 50 employees. The Department of Services for the Blind should be referenced in the bill. The Governor, in his second executive order, launched an initiative to address these issues through a task force. This task force will drive policy changes to improve the awareness around the challenges that individuals with disabilities face.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Haigh, prime sponsor; Lawrence Jacobsen; Andy Jacobsen; Larry Watkinson; Marcie Osborne, Community Employment Alliance; and Paul Bell.

(Neutral) Toby Olson, Governors Committee on Disability Issues.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.