S-4240.1

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**SENATE BILL 6597**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2016 Regular Session**

**By** Senator Keiser

AN ACT Relating to creating a task force on injured workers' independent medical exams; creating a new section; and providing an expiration date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1)(a) A joint legislative task force on injured workers' independent medical exams is established, with members as provided in this subsection.

(i) The president of the senate shall appoint two members from each of the two largest caucuses of the senate.

(ii) The speaker of the house of representatives shall appoint two members from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of representatives.

(iii) The president of the senate and the speaker of the house of representatives jointly shall appoint five members representing self-insurers, labor, worker compensation plaintiff and defense attorneys, and independent medical examiners.

(iv) The governor shall appoint two members representing the department of labor and industries, including one from the ombuds office.

(b) The task force shall choose its cochairs from among its legislative membership. The legislators shall convene the initial meeting of the task force.

(2) The task force shall:

(a) Collect and review specific, reliable data about the frequency and use of independent medical exams for both state fund exams and self-insurer exams.

(b) Oversee a one-time survey of workers, attending medical providers, independent medical examiners, and other critical stakeholders to identify areas of needed improvement.

(c) Examine options for increased communication with injured workers regarding the purpose and need for independent medical exams.

(d) Examine options for increased communication with claims adjusters and attending medical providers with the goal of decreasing the need for some independent medical exams.

(e) Review current independent medical exam certification and exam processes with the goal of recommending standard reporting protocols, a quality assurance standard for reports, and required training standards.

(f) Examine the statutes and regulations from other jurisdictions as they relate to reducing the frequency of independent medical exams.

(3) Staff support for the task force must be provided by the senate committee services and the house of representatives office of program research.

(4) Legislative members of the task force are reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120. Nonlegislative members are not entitled to be reimbursed for travel expenses if they are elected officials or are participating on behalf of an employer, governmental entity, or other organization. Any reimbursement for other nonlegislative members is subject to chapter43.03RCW.

(5) The legislative expenses of the task force must be paid jointly by the senate and the house of representatives. Task force expenditures are subject to approval by the senate facilities and operations committee and the house of representatives executive rules committee, or their successor committees. Nonlegislative expenses of the task force will be paid by the department of labor and industries out of the medical aid account.

(6) The task force shall report its findings and recommendations to the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 31, 2016.

(7) This section expires July 31, 2017.

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