

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1941

As Reported By House Committee On:
Government Administration

Title: An act relating to supported employment for persons with developmental disabilities.

Brief Description: Creating supported employment programs.

Sponsors: Representatives Robertson, Scott, D. Schmidt, Ogden, Cooke, Poulsen, Carrell, Wood, O'Brien, Cooper, Blalock, Costa, Cole, Conway, Gardner, Mason and Tokuda.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Government Administration: 2/28/97, 3/5/97 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives D. Schmidt, Chairman; D. Sommers, Vice Chairman; Scott, Ranking Minority Member; Gardner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Doumit; Dunn; Dunshee; Murray; Reams; Smith; L. Thomas; Wensman and Wolfe.

Staff: Bill Lynch (786-7092).

Background: In 1986 the Legislature recognized that people with developmental disabilities have high rates of unemployment and created a joint select committee to investigate barriers to employment for this segment of our population. As a result of recommendations by the joint select committee, several bills were enacted by the Legislature in 1987 to help address this problem. These bills included the establishment of a disability accommodation fund to help state agencies and institutions of higher education accommodate job site and equipment needs of people with disabilities, requiring the Department of Employment Security to give particular and special attention service to people with disabilities, and requiring the Department of Employment Security to establish an information clearinghouse for use by private and public sector employers and persons of disability.

The package of legislation adopted by the Legislature did not include the requirement for state agencies to designate a staff person who would be responsible for information and resource referrals to people with disabilities.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Each state agency, including institutions of higher education, with at least 50 full-time equivalent employees (FTEs) must develop and implement a supported employment program. The Department of Personnel is required to educate, encourage, and assist state agencies in implementing supported employment programs.

By July 1, 1997, the Office of Financial Management, in consultation with the Department of Personnel, must designate three agencies to implement a supported employment program. The number of agencies must be expanded each year until all agencies with 50 FTEs or more FTEs have implemented a program by January 1, 2001.

Each state agency required to implement a supported employment program must designate a coordinator to serve as the liaison between the agency and the Department of Personnel regarding supported employment. The coordinator is responsible for information and resource referral regarding the agency's supported employment program. The agency is also responsible for establishing goals for hiring persons with developmental disabilities, and submitting an annual report to the Supported Employment Advisory Committee. The annual report must describe the program in place, indicate the number of persons placed in supported employment positions, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

The Department of Personnel is responsible for providing human resources technical assistance to agencies implementing supported employment programs.

A Supported Employment Advisory Committee is created within the Department of Personnel and consists of representatives from the Department of Personnel, the Department of Social and Health Services, and supported employment provider associations. The advisory committee is responsible for reviewing annual reports on supported employment submitted by each agency, and with assisting the Department of Personnel to meet its obligations. The advisory committee must make recommendations about expanding the program to include people with other disabilities, including mental disabilities. The advisory committee must, upon request of the Legislature, prepare an annual report that evaluates the overall progress of supported employment programs in the state. The committee terminates on July 1, 2006.

Any supported employment positions do not count against an agency's allotted full-time equivalent employee positions and cannot displace employees or abrogate any reduction-in-force rights.

Supported employment is defined as employment for individuals with developmental disabilities who may require on-the-job training and long-term support in order to fulfill their job duties successfully. This program offers the same wages and benefits as similar nonsupported employment positions.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute allows for the supported employment program to be phased-in over time. Institutions of higher education are added by the substitute. The advisory committee may make recommendations to expand the program. A termination date is added for the advisory committee.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 23, 1997.

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

Testimony For: This is modeled after a successful King County program. The state has a terrible record in providing supported employment. This allows people who need a little assistance to be productive workers.

Testimony Against: (concerns) The bill should be broadened to include people with mental disabilities.

Testified: Representative Robertson, prime sponsor; Trish Borden, Partnership 2,000; Doug Eglinton, King Co. Council; Janet Adams; Edna Fund, Vocational Rehabilitation Division; Christina Valdez, Department of Personnel; Steven Collins, Harborview Mental Health Center; Sylvia Smith, Pathfinders; Brenda Ryan, Consumer-Run; Bev Hermanson, Washington Federation of State Employees; Eleanor Owen, Washington Advocates for Mentally Ill; Toby Olson, Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment; Diane Kowsky; Frances Yeaths, Whatcom Community Mental Health Council; and Sandra Colegrove.