

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1261

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to modifications of motor vehicles of injured workers.

Brief Description: Modifying motor vehicles of injured workers.

Sponsors: Representatives Romero, Conway, Veloria, Cooper, O'Brien and Kenney.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Commerce & Labor: 2/3/99, 2/23/99 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/12/99, 96-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/7/99, 46-0.

Brief Summary of Bill
<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Authorizes the Department of Labor and Industries to increase, by up to \$4,000, the amount paid toward modifying the motor vehicles of injured workers who are amputees or are paralyzed.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Clements, Republican Co-Chair; Conway, Democratic Co-Chair; B. Chandler, Republican Vice Chair; Wood, Democratic Vice Chair; Hurst; Lisk; McIntire and McMorris.

Staff: Chris Cordes (786-7103).

Background:

If an injured worker is an amputee or is paralyzed, the supervisor of industrial insurance at the Department of Labor and Industries may order payment toward the cost of modifying the worker's motor vehicle. The amount required to be paid by the

state fund or a self-insured employer may not exceed 50 percent of the state's average annual wage for one year (approximately \$15, 239 for fiscal year 1999).

Summary of Bill:

The supervisor of industrial insurance at the Department of Labor and Industries may, in his or her sole discretion, order an increase in the amount paid toward modifying motor vehicles of injured workers who are amputees or paralyzed. The supervisor may increase the standard amount (up to 50 percent of the state's average wage for one year) by no more than \$4,000.

This payment may be increased only for claims for injuries that occur on or after the bill's effective date.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S): The Senate amendment makes the increased vehicle modification benefit available to any otherwise eligible injured worker, regardless of the date of injury, by deleting the provision that limits the bill to workers with injuries occurring on or after the bill's effective date.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The Department of Labor and Industries needs to have more discretion to pay the costs when a van must be sent out of state to get the appropriate retrofitting. In some cases, the current cap will not cover the cost. Injured workers are not able to pay anything extra, considering the cost of special vans and other special needs. The bill should be retroactive to cover current injured workers. The fiscal impact is not large since the bill would apply to only a few cases per year.

Testimony Against: More information is needed. It is not clear that the current cap is inadequate since it is already indexed at twice the rate of inflation. Raising the cap could result in providers increasing prices.

Testified: (In favor) Representative Sandra Romero, prime sponsor; Joseph Cole; and Robby Stern, Washington State Labor Council.

(Opposed) Clif Finch, Association of Washington Business.

(Neutral) Doug Connell, Department of Labor and Industries.