

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 2724

C 151 L 96

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Providing for payment of job modification or accommodation costs for injured workers.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Commerce & Labor (originally sponsored by Representatives McMorris, Cole and Costa).

House Committee on Commerce & Labor
Senate Committee on Labor, Commerce & Trade

Background: The Department of Labor and Industries is authorized to pay up to \$5,000 for job modification at an injured worker's previous job or a new job. The statute provides that the purpose of the program is to encourage employers to modify jobs to accommodate retaining or hiring workers with job-related disabilities and that the program is intended to be a cooperative effort with the employer.

Under this program, the department was funding modifications at on-the-job training facilities. This type of funding was discontinued after the department determined that it was not authorized by the statute.

The department also pays for vocational rehabilitation services for an injured worker when these services are necessary and likely to enable the injured worker to become employable at gainful employment. These expenditures may not exceed \$3,000 in a 52-week period and are for books, tuition, fees, supplies, equipment, transportation, child or dependent care, and other necessary expenses. The department may extend the period of benefits for an additional 52 weeks.

Summary: The Department of Labor and Industries' authority to fund vocational rehabilitation services for injured workers is modified. Under the new authority, the department may spend an additional \$5,000 to

- (1) accommodate an injured worker when the accommodations are medically necessary for the worker to participate in an approved retraining plan; and
- (2) provide accommodations that are necessary to perform the essential functions of an occupation in which the worker is seeking employment, consistent with the retraining plan or the vocational evaluation.

The need for these accommodations must be verified by the worker's attending physician.

The total of the expenditures for an injured worker for these accommodations and for any job modification may not exceed \$5,000.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	97	0
Senate	49	0

Effective: June 6, 1996