

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5768

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: Senate Committee on Commerce & Labor (originally sponsored by Senators Horn, Thibaudeau, Winsley, Anderson, Oke, McDonald, Wood, Fairley, Wojahn and Heavey).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Government Administration: 3/26/97, 4/1/97 [DPA].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 10 members: Representatives D. Sommers, Vice Chairman; Scott, Ranking Minority Member; Gardner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Doumit; Dunshee; 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 for people with disabilities.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Department of Personnel (DOP), and the Office of Financial Management (OFM) must identify agencies that have positions and funding conducive to implement a supported employment program. The DOP and the DSHS are required to educate, encourage, and assist state agencies in implementing supported employment programs after consulting with supported employment provider associations and interested parties. An agency may only participate in supported employment activities if the agency is able to operate the program within its existing budget.

Each state agency required to implement a supported employment program must designate a coordinator to serve as the liaison between the agency and the DOP 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 submitting an annual update to the DSHS, the DOP, and the OFM. The annual update must describe the program in place, indicate the number of persons placed in supported employment positions, and evaluate the overall effectiveness of the program. The annual update must also include recommendations concerning expanding the supported employment program to include people with mental disabilities or other disabilities.

The DOP is responsible for providing human resources technical assistance to agencies implementing supported employment programs. At the request of the legislature, the DOP must make an annual report available that evaluates the progress of the program.

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.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute: Agencies may only participate in the program if they can do so within their existing budgets. Annual updates must include recommendations for expanding the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: This will allow people to get off public assistance. People with disabilities are able to work well and support themselves with little support. People with disabilities help humanize the workplace. This helps the families of people who are disabled.

Testimony Against: The federal definition should be used so that the people with the most severe disabilities will use the program.

Testified: Senator Thibaudeau, sponsor; Trish Borden, Partnership 2,000; Joanne O'Neil, parent; Dawn Adore; Robert Wardell, People First; Edna Fund, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, DSHS (with concerns); William McGovern, parent; William Elliott; Janet Adams; and George Tyler.