

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5263

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 20, 2019

Title: An act relating to school bus driver requirements.

Brief Description: Concerning school bus driver requirements.

Sponsors: Senator Zeiger.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/15/19, 2/20/19 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to adopt rules that lessen burdens in hiring and training school bus drivers.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Wilson, C., Vice Chair; Hawkins, Ranking Member; Holy, Hunt, McCoy, Mullet, Padden, Pedersen, Salomon and Wagoner.

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

Background: Federal School Bus Training Requirements. School bus driver qualifications are based primarily on federal law. Federal regulations require that school bus drivers have a commercial driving license (CDL) issued by a state and meet certain age, driving record, and testing requirements.

Federal law also contains standards for CDL tests, including that the tests measure drivers on necessary knowledge and skills. To obtain a school bus endorsement for a CDL, applicants must also pass a knowledge and skills test covering, among other things, loading and unloading children, emergency exits, operating practices, and laws related to railroad-highway grade crossings.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

State School Bus Training Requirements. Washington law also requires a CDL for drivers of school buses of any size in conformance with federal law. Currently state requirements for a CDL include, in part, 80 hours of instruction and particular trainings as part of a driver training program or certification by an employer, five years of driving experience, multiple background checks, and drug and alcohol testing. However, school districts are considered an employer for the purposes of CDL requirements and may certify instruction and training.

In addition, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is required to adopt rules governing the training and qualifications of school bus drivers, which presently include completion of an approved school bus driver training course, an annual school bus driver in-service training course, and various other requirements.

Summary of Bill: OSPI must adopt rules that lessen burdens in hiring and training school bus drivers, including, but not limited to, training hour requirements and training content. Any rules adopted in this area must be in compliance with existing federal regulations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: There is not a desire to reduce standards, but the pre-trip test contains unnecessary steps for school bus drivers. Student management and emergency situations are more relevant for bus drivers than mechanical memorization.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Hans Zeiger, Prime Sponsor; Damian Jenkins, Fife School District #417; Neil Asay, Bus Driver.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.