
**Labor & Workplace Standards
Committee**

HB 1458

Brief Description: Concerning unemployment insurance benefits for apprenticeship program participants.

Sponsors: Representatives Shavers, Fosse, Santos, Berry, Simmons, Alvarado, Doglio, Ormsby, Gregerson and Pollet.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Waives the waiting week for receiving unemployment insurance benefits for an eligible claimant who left work to enter an apprenticeship program or stopped work for a participating employer to attend related or supplemental instruction required for an apprenticeship program.
- Requires the Employment Security Department to convene a work group for the purpose of identifying and addressing legal and procedural barriers faced by eligible claimants participating in apprenticeship programs when those claimants seek timely access to unemployment insurance benefits.

Hearing Date: 2/1/23

Staff: Kelly Leonard (786-7147).

Background:

The unemployment insurance (UI) system, administered by the Employment Security Department (ESD), is designed to provide partial wage replacement for unemployed workers. Eligible unemployed workers receive benefits based on their earnings in their base year, which is

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

typically the first four of the last five completed calendar quarters. A person who is seeking benefits, referred to as a "claimant," is eligible if he or she: worked at least 680 hours in the base year; voluntarily quit for good cause or was otherwise separated from employment through no fault of his or her own; and is available to work and is actively searching for work. A person is not typically paid benefits during the first week he or she is eligible, unless a waiver applies. This is commonly referred to as a "waiting week." Funding for UI benefits are sourced from payroll taxes paid by employers. An employer's tax rate is experience-rated so that the rate is determined, in part, by the UI benefits paid to its employees.

Individuals who leave work to enter certain apprenticeship programs are considered to have left work for good cause and, therefore, are not disqualified from receiving UI benefits. The apprenticeship program must be approved by the Washington State Apprenticeship Training Council. Benefits are payable beginning the Sunday of the week prior to the week in which the claimant begins active participation in the apprenticeship program. These UI benefits are not charged to employers' experience rating accounts.

Summary of Bill:

Beginning January 1, 2024, the waiting week for receiving UI benefits is waived if a claimant left work to enter an apprenticeship program or stopped work for a participating employer to attend related or supplemental instruction required for an apprenticeship program.

ESD must convene a work group for the purpose of identifying and addressing legal and procedural barriers faced by eligible claimants participating in apprenticeship programs when those claimants seek timely access to UI benefits. The work group must include representatives of apprenticeship programs and ESD staff, as well as other appropriate stakeholders. ESD must submit a report with findings and recommendations, including a status update on applicable administrative efforts to reduce procedural barriers identified by the work group, to the Governor and Legislature by December 1, 2023.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 30, 2023.

Effective Date: The bill contains multiple effective dates. Please see the bill.