

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5886

As Passed Senate, February 1, 2024

Title: An act relating to adding purposes for the use of existing firefighter safety funding.

Brief Description: Adding purposes for the use of existing firefighter safety funding.

Sponsors: Senators Braun, Keiser, Nobles and Van De Wege; by request of Department of Labor & Industries.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor & Commerce: 1/15/24, 1/16/24 [DP].

Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 2/1/24, 49-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows the Department of Labor and Industries to provide firefighter best practices grants to employers of firefighters with limited resources to participate in assessments or training related to safety culture or other safety intervention activities in addition to current grant criteria for equipment and gear.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & COMMERCE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Keiser, Chair; Conway, Vice Chair; Saldaña, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Member; Braun, Hansen, MacEwen and Stanford.

Staff: Susan Jones (786-7404)

Background: Firefighters Best Practices. The Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) must establish best practices to improve safety and health outcomes for firefighters, including best practices:

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- for a proactive health and safety risk management system consisting of a joint employer and employee governance structure to oversee a continuous process of identification, evaluation, monitoring and controlling, and reporting safety and health hazards in the workplace;
- to reduce firefighter risk of exposure to carcinogens; and
- to prevent or reduce the risk of injuries and illness with particular focus on causes of compensable workers' compensation claims.

L&I must consult with firefighters and employers of firefighters in establishing best practices and criteria for a premium discount. L&I partnered with representatives from the Washington Fire Chiefs and the Washington State Council of Fire Fighters to develop the Firefighter Injury and Illness Reduction Program (FIIRE).

Premium Discounts. Employers of firefighters who implement best practices may be eligible for a premium discount according to criteria established by L&I. The potential premium discount is currently 10 percent.

Grants. L&I may provide funding of up to 2 percent of the premiums paid in the prior year from the risk classes for firefighters for the purposes of providing funding to employers of firefighters who have limited resources to purchase additional equipment and other gear that may be needed to follow best practices. L&I may require matching funds from employers.

Summary of Bill: The L&I grants are also available for employers of firefighters with limited resources to participate in assessments or training related to safety culture or other safety intervention activities.

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: The bill provides more tools to keep firefighters safer. The 2019 legislation was passed unanimously to create a program L&I calls FIIRE. The program limits the risk for firefighters. Employers may apply for grants. The bill allows L&I to provide grants to assist in systems for creating safety cultures. It brings together firefighters and employers to assess safety programs.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator John Braun, Prime Sponsor; Tammy Fellin, Department of Labor & Industries; Dave Bonauto, MD, MPH, Department of Labor & Industries.

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