

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 1311

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Financial Institutions, Housing & Insurance, March 25, 2009

Title: An act relating to reverse mortgage lending.

Brief Description: Regulating reverse mortgage lending practices.

Sponsors: Representatives Kirby, Bailey, Morrell, Sullivan, Kenney, Simpson and Nelson; by request of Department of Financial Institutions.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/03/09, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Financial Institutions, Housing & Insurance: 3/24/09, 3/25/09 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, HOUSING & INSURANCE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Berkey, Chair; Hobbs, Vice Chair; Franklin, McDermott, Parlette and Schoesler.

Staff: Philip Brady (786-7460)

Background: The Consumer Lending Act (CLA) was first passed in 1991 in order to protect Washington consumers from high-interest lenders. It was a combination of the Consumer Finance Act and the Industrial Loan Act, and has been amended several times. Under the CLA, a person or business is not permitted to engage in the business of making secured or unsecured loans without a license from the Department of Financial Institutions (DFI).

Reverse mortgage loans are transactions in which a borrower receives a loan against the equity in that person's home. The homeowner receives either a lump sum or periodic payments from the lender while the lender accumulates interest in the home's equity. When the borrower dies, sells the home, or moves, the loan becomes due and is usually paid out of any funds generated by sale or transfer of the home. There are two major kinds of reverse mortgage loans: (1) home equity conversion mortgages (HECMs), transactions approved by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development and subject to its regulation; and (2) proprietary reverse mortgage loans, loan products created by individual lenders that do not fall under the HECM program. There are no specific laws in Washington that deal with proprietary reverse mortgage transactions.

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.

DFI regulates consumer loan companies doing business in Washington. Consumer loan companies include mortgage lenders and consumer finance companies.

Summary of Bill: Lenders who are licensed by DFI under the CLA must meet two requirements in order to offer proprietary reverse mortgage loans: (1) they must maintain irrevocable letters of credit sufficient to meet known and expected mortgage payments for the next 12 months; and (2) they must maintain at least \$10 million of capital or have a binding written commitment for at least that amount from a parent company. Lenders are exempt from these requirements if they have strong enough credit, fully disburse the proceeds of loans at the time of closing, or if the loans are sold into a secondary market to an investor with a strong enough credit rating.

Lenders cannot offer proprietary reverse mortgage loan products unless those products have been preapproved by DFI. DFI is authorized to adopt rules regarding a preapproval process. In addition to any other DFI requirements, proprietary reverse mortgages products must include (1) penalty-free prepayment at any time during the term of the mortgage; (2) penalties for the lender if payments to the borrower are late; (3) loan maturation on the sale of the home, the borrower moving from the home, or a defaulting event; (4) no requirement that the borrower also purchase an annuity or any other insurance product; (5) referral to an independent housing counseling agency; (6) receipt of a certification that counseling has occurred before final acceptance; (7) a borrower who is at least 60 years old; and (8) a requirement that all payments go to the borrower or a designated representative rather than an intermediary or third party. Borrowers have a three-day right of rescission.

Loan originators must maintain safeguards to ensure that persons offering reverse mortgage loans do not offer any other financial or insurance products, and that purchase of these products are not a condition of the loan.

Applicants must receive a specified disclosure form before lenders may accept applications, and lenders must provide disclosure statements at least annually. Disclosure statements must include details of the loan advances, balances, the name and telephone number of an employee able to answer questions concerning reverse mortgage loans, and other terms. If the lender defaults and fails to cure the default on any reverse mortgage loan, the borrower is entitled to treble damages. Though they are not subject to most regulations in this act, default on a HECM is considered a violation of this act.

As long as it does not conflict with federal law, proceeds from proprietary reverse mortgage loans are treated as proceeds from a loan and not income for the purposes of means-tested aid programs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: These products were inadvertently eliminated last year when the CLA was amended. This bill addresses that accidental restriction and creates some good consumer protections. An amendment might be offered to correct some of the no-fee reverse mortgages and eliminate the treble damages clause.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Kirby, prime sponsor; Deb Bortner, DFI; Ken Linderberg, All Reverse Mortgages; Amy Crewdson, Columbia Legal Services; Steve Buckner, Washington Association of Mortgage Professionals.