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**HOUSE BILL 2355**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2016 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Kirby, Vick, and Blake

AN ACT Relating to registered service contract and protection product guarantee providers; and amending RCW 48.110.030, 48.110.050, 48.110.055, 48.110.073, 48.110.130, and 48.110.902.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

**Sec.**  RCW 48.110.030 and 2014 c 82 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) A person may not act as, or offer to act as, or hold himself or herself out to be a service contract provider in this state, nor may a service contract be sold to a consumer in this state, unless the service contract provider has a valid registration as a service contract provider issued by the commissioner.

(2) Applicants to be a service contract provider must make an application to the commissioner upon a form to be furnished by the commissioner. The application must include or be accompanied by the following information and documents:

(a) All basic organizational documents of the service contract provider, including any articles of incorporation, articles of association, partnership agreement, trade name certificate, trust agreement, shareholder agreement, bylaws, and other applicable documents, and all amendments to those documents;

(b) The identities of the service contract provider's executive officer or officers directly responsible for the service contract provider's service contract business, and, if more than fifty percent of the service contract provider's gross revenue is derived from the sale of service contracts, the identities of the service contract provider's directors and stockholders having beneficial ownership of ten percent or more of any class of securities;

(c)(i) For service contract providers relying on RCW 48.110.050(2) (a) or (b) or 48.110.075(2)(a) to assure the faithful performance of its obligations to service contract holders, the most recent audited annual financial statements or other financial reports acceptable to the commissioner for the ((~~two~~)) most recent ((~~years~~)) year which prove that the applicant ((~~is solvent and any information the commissioner may require in order to review the current financial condition of the applicant. If the service contract provider is relying on RCW 48.110.050(2)(c) to assure the faithful performance of its obligations to service contract holders, then the audited financial statements of the service contract provider's parent company must also be filed. In lieu of submitting audited financial statements, a service contract provider relying on RCW 48.110.050(2)(a) or 48.110.075(2)(a) to assure the faithful performance of its obligations to service contract holders may comply with the requirements of this subsection (2)(c) by submitting annual financial statements of the applicant that are certified as accurate by two or more officers of the applicant;~~)) has and maintains a net worth or stockholder's equity of two hundred thousand dollars or more. In lieu of submitting audited financial statements, a service contract provider relying on RCW 48.110.050(2)(a) or 48.110.075(2)(a) to assure the faithful performance of its obligations to service contract holders may comply with the requirements of this subsection (2)(c)(i) by submitting annual financial statements of the applicant that are certified as accurate by two or more officers of the applicant; or

(ii) For service contract providers relying on RCW 48.110.050(2)(c) to assure the faithful performance of its obligations to service contract holders, the most recent audited annual financial statements or form 10-K or form 20-F filed with the securities and exchange commission which prove that the applicant has and maintains a net worth or stockholder's equity of one hundred million dollars or more. However, if the service contract provider is relying on its parent company's net worth or stockholder's equity to meet the requirements of RCW 48.110.050(2)(c) and the service contract provider has provided the commissioner with a written guarantee by the parent company in accordance with RCW 48.110.050(2)(c), then the most recent audited financial statements or form 10-K or form 20-F filed with the securities and exchange commission of the service contract provider's parent company must be filed and the applicant need not submit its own financial statements or demonstrate a minimum net worth or stockholder's equity; and

(d) An application fee of two hundred fifty dollars, which must be deposited into the general fund((~~; and~~

~~(e) Any other pertinent information required by the commissioner~~)).

(3) Each registered service contract provider must appoint the commissioner as the service contract provider's attorney to receive service of legal process issued against the service contract provider in this state upon causes of action arising within this state. Service upon the commissioner as attorney constitutes effective legal service upon the service contract provider.

(a) With the appointment the service contract provider must designate the person to whom the commissioner must forward legal process so served upon him or her.

(b) The appointment is irrevocable, binds any successor in interest or to the assets or liabilities of the service contract provider, and remains in effect for as long as there could be any cause of action against the service contract provider arising out of any of the service contract provider's contracts or obligations in this state.

(c) The service of process must be accomplished and processed in the manner prescribed under RCW 48.02.200.

(4) The commissioner may refuse to issue a registration if the commissioner determines that the service contract provider, or any individual responsible for the conduct of the affairs of the service contract provider under subsection (2)(b) of this section, is not competent((~~,~~)); not trustworthy((~~, financially responsible, or~~)); has had a license as a service contract provider or similar license denied or revoked for cause by any state; or cannot demonstrate a net worth or stockholder's equity in accordance with the applicable requirements of subsection (2)(c) of this section.

(5) A registration issued under this section is valid, unless surrendered, suspended, or revoked by the commissioner, or not renewed for so long as the service contract provider continues in business in this state and remains in compliance with this chapter. A registration is subject to renewal annually on the first day of July upon application of the service contract provider and payment of a fee of two hundred dollars, which must be deposited into the general fund. If not so renewed, the registration expires on the June 30th next preceding.

(6) A service contract provider must keep current the information required to be disclosed in its registration under this section by reporting all material changes or additions within thirty days after the end of the month in which the change or addition occurs.

**Sec.**  RCW 48.110.050 and 2006 c 274 s 6 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Service contracts shall not be issued, sold, or offered for sale in this state or sold to consumers in this state unless the service contract provider has:

(a) Provided a receipt for, or other written evidence of, the purchase of the service contract to the contract holder; and

(b) Provided a copy of the service contract to the service contract holder within a reasonable period of time from the date of purchase.

(2) In order to either demonstrate its financial responsibility or assure the faithful performance of the service contract provider's obligations to its service contract holders, every service contract provider shall comply with the requirements of one of the following:

(a) Insure all service contracts under a reimbursement insurance policy issued by an insurer holding a certificate of authority from the commissioner or a risk retention group, as defined in 15 U.S.C. Sec. 3901(a)(4), as long as that risk retention group is in full compliance with the federal liability risk retention act of 1986 (15 U.S.C. Sec. 3901 et seq.), is in good standing in its domiciliary jurisdiction, and is properly registered with the commissioner under chapter 48.92 RCW. The insurance required by this subsection must meet the following requirements:

(i) The insurer or risk retention group must, at the time the policy is filed with the commissioner, and continuously thereafter, maintain surplus as to policyholders and paid-in capital of at least fifteen million dollars and annually file audited financial statements with the commissioner; and

(ii) The commissioner may authorize an insurer or risk retention group that has surplus as to policyholders and paid-in capital of less than fifteen million dollars, but at least equal to ten million dollars, to issue the insurance required by this subsection if the insurer or risk retention group demonstrates to the satisfaction of the commissioner that the company maintains a ratio of direct written premiums, wherever written, to surplus as to policyholders and paid-in capital of not more than three to one;

(b)(i) Maintain a funded reserve account for its obligations under its service contracts issued and outstanding in this state. The reserves shall not be less than forty percent of the gross consideration received, less claims paid, on the sale of the service contract for all in-force contracts. The reserve account shall be subject to examination and review by the commissioner; and

(ii) Place in trust with the commissioner a financial security deposit, having a value of not less than five percent of the gross consideration received, less claims paid, on the sale of the service contract for all service contracts issued and in force, but not less than twenty-five thousand dollars, consisting of one of the following:

(A) A surety bond issued by an insurer holding a certificate of authority from the commissioner;

(B) Securities of the type eligible for deposit by authorized insurers in this state;

(C) Cash;

(D) An evergreen letter of credit issued by a qualified financial institution; or

(E) Another form of security prescribed by rule by the commissioner; or

(c)(i) Maintain, or its parent company maintain, a net worth or stockholder's equity of at least one hundred million dollars; and

(ii) Upon request, provide the commissioner with a copy of the service contract provider's or, if using the net worth or stockholder's equity of its parent company to satisfy the one hundred million dollar requirement, the service contract provider's parent company's most recent form 10-K or form 20-F filed with the securities and exchange commission within the last calendar year, or if the company does not file with the securities and exchange commission, a copy of the service contract provider's or, if using the net worth or stockholder's equity of its parent company to satisfy the one hundred million dollar requirement, the service contract provider's parent company's most recent audited financial statements, which shows a net worth of the service contract provider or its parent company of at least one hundred million dollars. If the service contract provider's parent company's form 10-K, form 20-F, or audited financial statements are filed with the commissioner to meet the service contract provider's financial stability requirement, then the parent company shall agree to guarantee the obligations of the service contract provider relating to service contracts sold by the service contract provider in this state. A copy of the guarantee shall be filed with the commissioner. The guarantee shall be irrevocable as long as there is in force in this state any contract or any obligation arising from service contracts guaranteed, unless the parent company has made arrangements approved by the commissioner to satisfy its obligations under the guarantee.

(3) Service contracts shall require the service contract provider to permit the service contract holder to return the service contract within twenty days of the date the service contract was mailed to the service contract holder or within ten days of delivery if the service contract is delivered to the service contract holder at the time of sale, or within a longer time period permitted under the service contract. Upon return of the service contract to the service contract provider within the applicable period, if no claim has been made under the service contract prior to the return to the service contract provider, the service contract is void and the service contract provider shall refund to the service contract holder, or credit the account of the service contract holder with the full purchase price of the service contract. The right to void the service contract provided in this subsection is not transferable and shall apply only to the original service contract purchaser. A ten percent penalty per month shall be added to a refund of the purchase price that is not paid or credited within thirty days after return of the service contract to the service contract provider.

(4) This section does not apply to service contracts on motor vehicles or to protection product guarantees.

**Sec.**  RCW 48.110.055 and 2011 c 47 s 17 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) This section applies to protection product guarantee providers.

(2) A person must not act as, or offer to act as, or hold himself or herself out to be a protection product guarantee provider in this state, nor may a protection product be sold to a consumer in this state, unless the protection product guarantee provider has:

(a) A valid registration as a protection product guarantee provider issued by the commissioner; and

(b) Either demonstrated its financial responsibility or assured the faithful performance of the protection product guarantee provider's obligations to its protection product guarantee holders by insuring all protection product guarantees under a reimbursement insurance policy issued by an insurer holding a certificate of authority from the commissioner or a risk retention group, as defined in 15 U.S.C. Sec. 3901(a)(4), as long as that risk retention group is in full compliance with the federal liability risk retention act of 1986 (15 U.S.C. Sec. 3901 et seq.), is in good standing in its domiciliary jurisdiction, and properly registered with the commissioner under chapter 48.92 RCW. The insurance required by this subsection must meet the following requirements:

(i) The insurer or risk retention group must, at the time the policy is filed with the commissioner, and continuously thereafter, maintain surplus as to policyholders and paid-in capital of at least fifteen million dollars and annually file audited financial statements with the commissioner; and

(ii) The commissioner may authorize an insurer or risk retention group that has surplus as to policyholders and paid-in capital of less than fifteen million dollars, but at least equal to ten million dollars, to issue the insurance required by this subsection if the insurer or risk retention group demonstrates to the satisfaction of the commissioner that the company maintains a ratio of direct written premiums, wherever written, to surplus as to policyholders and paid-in capital of not more than three to one.

(3) Applicants to be a protection product guarantee provider must make an application to the commissioner upon a form to be furnished by the commissioner. The application must include or be accompanied by the following information and documents:

(a) The names of the protection product guarantee provider's executive officer or officers directly responsible for the protection product guarantee provider's protection product guarantee business and their biographical affidavits on a form prescribed by the commissioner;

(b) The name, address, and telephone number of any administrators designated by the protection product guarantee provider to be responsible for the administration of protection product guarantees in this state;

(c) A copy of the protection product guarantee reimbursement insurance policy or policies;

(d) A copy of each protection product guarantee the protection product guarantee provider proposes to use in this state;

(e) ((~~Any other pertinent information required by the commissioner~~)) Financial statements certified as accurate by two or more officers of the applicant which prove that the applicant has and maintains a net worth or stockholder's equity of two hundred thousand dollars or more; and

(f) A nonrefundable application fee of two hundred fifty dollars.

(4) Each registered protection product guarantee provider must appoint the commissioner as the protection product guarantee provider's attorney to receive service of legal process issued against the protection product guarantee provider in this state upon causes of action arising within this state. Service upon the commissioner as attorney constitutes effective legal service upon the protection product guarantee provider.

(a) With the appointment the protection product guarantee provider must designate the person to whom the commissioner must forward legal process so served upon him or her.

(b) The appointment is irrevocable, binds any successor in interest or to the assets or liabilities of the protection product guarantee provider, and remains in effect for as long as there could be any cause of action against the protection product guarantee provider arising out of any of the protection product guarantee provider's contracts or obligations in this state.

(c) The service of process must be accomplished and processed in the manner prescribed under RCW 48.02.200.

(5) The commissioner may refuse to issue a registration if the commissioner determines that the protection product guarantee provider, or any individual responsible for the conduct of the affairs of the protection product guarantee provider under subsection (3)(a) of this section, is not competent((~~,~~)); not trustworthy((~~, financially responsible, or~~)); has had a license as a protection product guarantee provider or similar license denied or revoked for cause by any state; or cannot demonstrate a net worth or stockholder's equity in accordance with the applicable requirements of subsection (3)(e) of this section.

(6) A registration issued under this section is valid, unless surrendered, suspended, or revoked by the commissioner, or not renewed for so long as the protection product guarantee provider continues in business in this state and remains in compliance with this chapter. A registration is subject to renewal annually on the first day of July upon application of the protection product guarantee provider and payment of a fee of two hundred fifty dollars. If not so renewed, the registration expires on the June 30th next preceding.

(7) A protection product guarantee provider must keep current the information required to be disclosed in its registration under this section by reporting all material changes or additions within thirty days after the end of the month in which the change or addition occurs.

**Sec.**  RCW 48.110.073 and 2006 c 274 s 20 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) If the service contract provider or protection product guarantee provider is using ((~~[the]~~)) the reimbursement insurance policy to satisfy the requirements of RCW 48.110.050(2)(a), 48.110.055(2)(b), or 48.110.075(2)(a), then the reimbursement insurance policy shall be filed with and approved by the commissioner in accordance with and pursuant to the requirements of chapter 48.18 RCW. Reimbursement insurance policy rates shall be filed with and approved by the commissioner in accordance with and pursuant to the requirements of chapter 48.19 RCW only if the insured service contract provider is domiciled in this state.

(2) All service contracts forms covering motor vehicles must be filed with and approved by the commissioner prior to the service contract forms being used, issued, delivered, sold, or marketed in this state or to residents of this state.

(3) All service contracts forms covering motor vehicles being used, issued, delivered, sold, or marketed in this state or to residents of this state by motor vehicle manufacturers or import distributors or wholly owned subsidiaries thereof must be filed with the commissioner for approval within sixty days after the motor vehicle manufacturer or import distributor or wholly owned subsidiary thereof begins using the service contracts forms.

(4) The commissioner shall disapprove any motor vehicle service contract form if:

(a) The form is in any respect in violation of, or does not comply with, this chapter or any applicable order or regulation of the commissioner issued under this chapter;

(b) The form contains or incorporates by reference any inconsistent, ambiguous, or misleading clauses, or exceptions and conditions;

(c) The form has any title, heading, or other indication of its provisions that is misleading; or

(d) The purchase of the contract is being solicited by deceptive advertising.

**Sec.**  RCW 48.110.130 and 2006 c 274 s 14 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The commissioner may, subject to chapter 48.04 RCW, deny, suspend, or revoke the registration of a service contract provider or protection product guarantee provider if the commissioner finds that the service contract provider or protection product guarantee provider:

(a) Has violated this chapter or the commissioner's rules and orders;

(b) Has refused to be investigated or to produce its accounts, records, and files for investigation, or if any of its officers have refused to give information with respect to its affairs or refused to perform any other legal obligation as to an investigation, when required by the commissioner;

(c) Has, without just cause, refused to pay proper claims or perform services arising under its contracts or has, without just cause, caused service contract holders or protection product guarantee holders to accept less than the amount due them or caused service contract holders or protection product guarantee holders to employ attorneys or bring suit against the service contract provider or protection product guarantee provider to secure full payment or settlement of claims;

(d) Is affiliated with or under the same general management or interlocking directorate or ownership as another service contract provider or protection product guarantee provider which unlawfully transacts business in this state without having a registration;

(e) At any time fails to meet any qualification for which issuance of the registration could have been refused had such failure then existed and been known to the commissioner;

(f) Has been convicted of, or has entered a plea of guilty or nolo contendere to, a felony;

(g) Is under suspension or revocation in another state with respect to its service contract business or protection product business;

(h) Has made a material misstatement in its application for registration;

(i) Has obtained or attempted to obtain a registration through misrepresentation or fraud;

(j) Has, in the transaction of business under its registration, used fraudulent, coercive, or dishonest practices;

(k) Has failed to pay any judgment rendered against it in this state regarding a service contract or protection product guarantee within sixty days after the judgment has become final; or

(l) Has failed to respond promptly to any inquiry from the insurance commissioner relative to service contract or protection product business. A lack of response within fifteen business days from receipt of an inquiry is untimely. A response must be in writing, unless otherwise indicated in the inquiry.

(2) The commissioner may, without advance notice or hearing thereon, immediately suspend the registration of a service contract provider or protection product guarantee provider if the commissioner finds that any of the following circumstances exist:

(a) The provider ((~~is insolvent~~)) does not maintain the minimum net worth required by this chapter;

(b) A proceeding for receivership, conservatorship, rehabilitation, or other delinquency proceeding regarding the service contract provider or protection product guarantee provider has been commenced in any state; or

(c) The ((~~financial condition or~~)) business practices of the service contract provider or protection product guarantee provider otherwise pose an imminent threat to the public health, safety, or welfare of the residents of this state.

(3) If the commissioner finds that grounds exist for the suspension or revocation of a registration issued under this chapter, the commissioner may, in lieu of suspension or revocation, impose a fine upon the service contract provider or protection product guarantee provider in an amount not more than two thousand dollars per violation.

**Sec.**  RCW 48.110.902 and 2006 c 274 s 21 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) RCW 48.110.030 (2)(a) and (b), (3), and (4), 48.110.040, 48.110.060, 48.110.100, 48.110.110, 48.110.075 (2)(a) and (b) and (4)(e), and 48.110.073 (1) and (2) do not apply to motor vehicle service contracts issued by a motor vehicle manufacturer or import distributor covering vehicles manufactured or imported by the motor vehicle manufacturer or import distributor. For purposes of this section, "motor vehicle service contract" includes a contract or agreement sold for separately stated consideration for a specific duration to perform any of the services set forth in RCW 48.110.020(18)(b).

(2) RCW 48.110.030(2)(c) does not apply to a publicly traded motor vehicle manufacturer or import distributor.

(3) RCW 48.110.030 (2)(a) through (c), (3), and (4), 48.110.040, and 48.110.073(2) do not apply to wholly owned subsidiaries of motor vehicle manufacturers or import distributors.

(4) The adoption of chapter 274, Laws of 2006 does not imply that a vehicle protection product warranty was insurance prior to October 1, 2006.

**--- END ---**