

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1159

As Passed House:
March 6, 2015

Title: An act relating to the safety of new drivers.

Brief Description: Establishing a pilot program requiring certain drivers under eighteen years of age to display a decal on a vehicle being operated by the driver.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Pike, Wylie, Moeller, Zeiger, Kochmar, Harmsworth and Ryu).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/29/15, 2/16/15 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/6/15, 53-44.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Establishes a pilot program in Clark County that requires a "New Driver" decal be displayed on any vehicle operated by a person who is under 18 years of age.
- Requires a person to perform community service if he or she fails to properly display a "New Driver" decal.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 20 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Farrell, Vice Chair; Fey, Vice Chair; Moscoso, Vice Chair; Orcutt, Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Gregerson, Hayes, Kochmar, McBride, Moeller, Ortiz-Self, Pike, Riccelli, Rodne, Sells, Takko, Tarleton, Young and Zeiger.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Shea and Wilson.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Hargrove, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Harmsworth.

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.

Staff: Andrew Russell (786-7143).

Background:

In Washington, a driver who is under 18 years of age may operate a motor vehicle only if he or she holds either an instruction permit or an intermediate license. A driver who is over 18 years of age may also operate a vehicle with an instruction permit, but he or she will be issued only a regular driver's license upon completion of the instruction period. The Department of Licensing (DOL) may issue an instruction permit to applicants who are at least 15 years of age and who have passed the knowledge portion of the driver test. The instruction permit is valid for up to one year and allows the holder to operate a motor vehicle on public highways if an instructor or experienced driver occupies the seat beside the driver.

The DOL may issue an intermediate license to applicants who are at least 16 years of age, but younger than 18 years of age. Additionally, the applicant must not have committed a traffic infraction in the six months preceding his or her application for an intermediate license and must not have committed any offense relating to drugs or alcohol while he or she held an instruction permit. An intermediate license authorizes the holder to drive without supervision, but it imposes conditions relating to the time of day the holder may drive and the number of passengers in the vehicle.

Finally, a regular driver's license entitles the holder to operate a motor vehicle without any restrictions regarding the time of day he or she may drive or the number of passengers in the vehicle.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The DOL must establish a pilot program in counties with a population of at least 350,000 that border the Columbia River. Currently, that describes only Clark County. The pilot program requires drivers under 18 years of age to affix to any vehicle he or she is driving a decal that reads "NEW DRIVER." This decal must be at least 12 inches wide, 4 inches high, and be printed in white lettering on a red background. The DOL may provide such decal to any person that applies to the DOL for an instruction permit, intermediate license, or a driver's license, and the decal may be offered to any other applicant. The DOL must charge a fee for the decal equal to the cost of producing and issuing it. Additionally, the decal may be offered by a private driver training school and by a public school providing traffic safety education. Finally, a failure to properly display the decal when required is punishable by 20 hours of community service.

The DOL is required to provide a report to the Legislature by December 31, 2019, regarding the program's implementation and impact on public safety. The act expires on July 1, 2020.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This is about saving the lives of our young drivers on Washington roadways. People give student drivers a wide berth, because you know they might be a little unpredictable. In Clark County, 35 percent of all fatality accidents involve young drivers, and 45 percent of serious injury accidents involve young drivers. This population is very over-represented in the accident rate. In 2010 New Jersey passed a law like this, and it reduced road crashes by 9.5 percent—about 3,200 fewer crashes in this age group, which saved about 1,000 lives. These stickers can be issued by the private driver training schools to help bring down the cost of implementing this program. Young drivers engage in more risky behavior, which translates to more fatalities and injuries on the roadways.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 16 to 25 year olds, and this age group is listed as a Priority One in the Target Zero plan. The list of strategies that work for making young drivers safer is short. Target Zero lists a decal program as an option to make young drivers safer, and this option is based on the data from New Jersey. The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia has offered to study the outcomes of this program.

The DOL is supportive of this effort, as it is supportive of any measure that gets at young driver safety. The DOL is the lead agency in young drivers in working to reduce fatal and serious injury collisions. Many of the "low hanging fruit" strategies have been implemented in this state, and they are working. As we move forward to Target Zero, we need to start looking at new ideas that get at issue areas. Washington has one of the strongest intermediate driving programs in the country, and it has led to significant results.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Pike, prime sponsor; Shelly Baldwin, Washington Traffic Safety Commission; and Tony Sermonti, Department of Licensing.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.