

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2578

As Reported by House Committee On: Labor & Workplace Standards

Title: An act relating to job search requirements for unemployment compensation claimants.

Brief Description: Addressing job search requirements for unemployment compensation claimants.

Sponsors: Representatives Jinkins, Manweller, Gregerson, McCabe, G. Hunt, Tharinger, Rossetti and Zeiger.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Labor & Workplace Standards: 1/21/16, 1/26/16 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows in-person activities with a career counselor at an accredited institution of higher education to qualify as a job-search activity for unemployment claimants.
- Allows the Employment Security Department to define by rule other methods of job-search activity.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKPLACE STANDARDS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Sells, Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Manweller, Ranking Minority Member; G. Hunt, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCabe, Moeller and Ormsby.

Staff: Joan Elgee (786-7106).

Background:

The unemployment compensation system provides partial wage replacement benefits for workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own. An individual is eligible to receive unemployment benefits if he or she: (1) worked at least 680 hours in covered employment in his or her base year; (2) was separated from employment through no fault of

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his or her own or quit work for good cause; and (3) is able to work and is actively searching for suitable work.

For each week in which an individual files a claim for benefits, the individual must, at a minimum, make three contacts with employers or participate in three in-person job search activities at the local WorkSource office, or do any combination of three employer contacts or in-person job-search activities. WorkSource activities include workshops and training classes. After an individual has received five weeks of benefits, the individual must be able to provide evidence of job search activity.

Summary of Bill:

Job-search requirements are modified to allow approved in-person activities with a career counselor at an accredited institution of higher education. In addition, the Employment Security Department may define other methods of job-search activity by rule. At least three instances per week of any combination of employer contacts, WorkSource activities, higher education career counselor activities, or other activities permitted by rule satisfy the job-search requirement.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 3, 2016.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This is a bipartisan bill. A constituent found it was more helpful to go back to her higher education institution for job counseling than go to WorkSource. The unemployment system is outdated and this bill will give needed flexibility.

A national work group is looking into what should count for purposes of job search.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) The bill is supported. It allows the Employment Security Department to keep up with the way people look for work. The initial five weeks should also be addressed. The Employment Security Department should be able to enforce the job search requirement during this time. There is a disconnect between requiring a person to look for work but not having to show evidence of doing so.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Jenkins, prime sponsor; Joe Kendo, Washington State Labor Council; Neil Gorrell, Employment Security Department; and Sarah Miller.

(Other) Robert Battles, Association of Washington Business.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.