

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5937

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to the farm internship pilot project.

Brief Description: Addressing the farm internship pilot project.

Sponsors: Senator Parlette.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/23/16, 2/24/16 [DP].

<p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adds Okanogan County to the farm internship pilot project.
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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Zeiger, Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Frame, Hargrove, Holy, Reykdal, Sells, Stambaugh, Tarleton and Van Werven.

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

Farm Internship Pilot Program.

The Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) was redirected in 2014 to reestablish the farm internship pilot project that expired in 2011. The purpose of the farm internship pilot project is to allow small farms to hire individuals interested in learning about farming practices.

Small farms with gross sales of less than \$250,000 located in the counties of San Juan, Skagit, King, Whatcom, Kitsap, Pierce, Jefferson, Spokane, Yakima, Chelan, Grant, Island, Snohomish, Kittitas, Lincoln, and Thurston are allowed to participate. These small farms are allowed to employ three farm interns under special certificates issued by the L&I. The intern does not need to be enrolled at an institution of higher education to participate, but the

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internship must include an educational component that provides the intern with vocational knowledge about farming practices and enterprises.

Small farm interns are exempt from the Minimum Wage Act (MWA) and may receive compensation in the form of room and board. Small farm interns fall into a special risk class for workers' compensation insurance as well. The farm internship pilot program expires December 31, 2017.

Minimum Wage Act.

The MWA establishes a minimum wage which must be paid to all employees, unless they are exempt. Exempt employees include certain agricultural employees and volunteers for nonprofit organizations. In addition, the Director of the L&I may, to prevent curtailment of opportunities for employment, issue special certificates to employers allowing them to pay wages lower than the minimum wage to learners.

Summary of Bill:

The farm internship pilot project is expanded to include Okanogan County.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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 a simple request to add Okanogan County to the farm internship program, which is a good program and works well.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Parlette, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.