

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2272

As Reported by House Committee On: Transportation

Title: An act relating to a designation on driver's licenses for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Brief Description: Providing for a designation on driver's licenses for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Sponsors: Representatives Orwall, Irwin, Kilduff, Leavitt, Thai, Appleton, Wylie, Doglio and Goodman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/3/20, 2/11/20 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides a designation on a driver's license that the driver is deaf or hard of hearing, if applicable.
- Allows any person to apply to obtain a voluntary deaf or hard-of-hearing designation.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 30 members: Representatives Fey, Chair; Wylie, 1st Vice Chair; Slatter, 2nd Vice Chair; Valdez, 2nd Vice Chair; Barkis, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Young, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Boehnke, Chambers, Chapman, Doglio, Duerr, Dufault, Entenman, Eslick, Goehner, Gregerson, Irwin, Kloba, Lovick, McCaslin, Mead, Orcutt, Ortiz-Self, Paul, Ramos, Riccelli, Shewmake, Van Werven and Volz.

Staff: Christine Thomas (786-7142).

Background:

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.

For a fee, the Department of Licensing (DOL) issues driver's licenses that are valid for up to six years to every qualifying applicant. The license must include: a distinguishing number assigned to the licensee; the name of record; date of birth; photograph; a signature; and, if applicable, a veteran's designation.

Summary of Bill:

The DOL must include a designation on a driver's license that the driver is deaf or hard of hearing, if applicable. Any person may apply to obtain a voluntary deaf or hard-of-hearing designation on their driver's license.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2020.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Adding a universal symbol to a driver's license provides information to law enforcement officers that the driver may have additional communication needs. Cards and placards for deaf and hard-of-hearing drivers are available for use, but because reaching for a card may be interpreted as suspicious, a designation on a driver's license is a safer and more efficient way to convey the condition. Deaf and hard-of-hearing disabilities are invisible until the person signs and there is a lack of knowledge of the needs of people who are deaf. Adding a designation will improve communication, awareness, and understanding in the law enforcement community. Obtaining the designation is completely voluntary. Some may not want the designation for personal reasons, but those who want the designation should have the option to apply for it.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) More information to law enforcement officers helps people remain safe, both the individuals as well as the officers. This bill should be coordinated with the Travis Alert Act to ensure that officers can look up a name through their computer systems and discover the medical condition of the individual.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Orwall, prime sponsor; Karen Atwood, Washington State Association of the Deaf; Karen Philo-House; and John Taft.

(Other) James McMahan, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.