
Labor & Workplace Standards Committee

HB 2646

Brief Description: Reducing work-related musculoskeletal disorders in the health care sector.

Sponsors: Representatives Kilduff, Ryu, Doglio, Sells, Davis, Macri, Peterson and Pollet.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Labor and Industries to establish best practices to reduce risk factors associated with work-related musculoskeletal disorders in the health care sector.
- Provides for potential industrial insurance premium discounts for employers implementing best practices.
- Authorizes funding to assist employers in purchasing equipment and making modifications to follow best practices.

Hearing Date: 1/21/20

Staff: Trudes Tango (786-7384).

Background:

Under the state's Industrial Insurance Act (Act), a worker who, in the course of employment, is injured or suffers disability from an occupational disease is entitled to certain benefits. Employers must obtain industrial insurance either through the State Fund administered by the Department of Labor and Industries (Department), or, if qualified, may self-insure.

Musculoskeletal disorders generally refer to conditions that involve the nerves, tendons, muscles, and supporting structure of the body. According to research from the Department's Safety and Health Assessment and Research for Prevention (SHARP) program, the most common type of injury experienced by health care workers is musculoskeletal disorders.

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.

Work-related Musculoskeletal Disorders (WMSDs) in health care have been associated with the manual lifting and handling of patients. In response, the Legislature required Washington hospitals to implement safe patient handling policies and to train employees on the lifting of patients. That legislation provided a Business and Occupations tax credit for the purchase of patient handling equipment and reduced premiums for hospitals with fully implemented safe patient handling programs.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Labor and Industries (Department) must develop best practices to reduce risk factors associated with WMSD in the health care sector.

Best practices include employers:

- involving employees and all levels of management in developing and implementing their own programs for reducing WMSD;
- conducting ongoing evaluations of their programs;
- using effective assessment tools, including accessing the Department's consultation services, to determine when and under what circumstances appropriate equipment and technique could be used; and
- identifying aspect of work that pose the greatest risk of injury.

A health care sector employer that implements a program consistent with best practices may be eligible for a premium discount, as determined by the Department, according to the Department's criteria.

The Director of the Department may provide funding, up to 2 percent of premiums paid in the prior year, to State Fund employers of health care providers who have limited resources to purchase equipment and make modifications needed to follow best practices for reducing WMSD. The Department may require matching funds from employers.

The provisions do not take effect until January 1, 2021.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 17, 2020.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2021.