

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5827

As of February 21, 2019

Title: An act relating to exemptions from the use of safety belts.

Brief Description: Clarifying the exemption from safety belt use for physical or medical reasons.

Sponsors: Senators Randall, Fortunato, Dhingra, Holy, Kuderer and Nguyen; by request of Washington State Patrol.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/20/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Prohibits operators and passengers operating a commercial motor vehicle from exercising the current medical exception to the requirement to wear a safety belt.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: Generally under current law, every person sixteen years of age or older operating or riding in a motor vehicle must wear a properly adjusted and securely fastened safety belt assembly. Violation of this law is a traffic infraction.

Some exceptions apply to the safety belt requirement. One current exception includes if an operator or passenger possesses written verification from a licensed physician that the person is unable to wear a safety belt for physical or medical reasons.

For purposes of the vehicle inspections code, a commercial motor vehicle is defined as a vehicle used on a highway in interstate or intrastate commerce to transport passengers or property, when the vehicle:

- has a gross vehicle weight rating or gross combination weight rating or gross weight or gross combination weight of 10,001 pounds or more;

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- is designed or used to transport more than eight passengers, including the driver, for compensation;
- is designed or used to transport more than fifteen passengers, including the driver, and is not used to transport passengers for compensation; or
- is used in transporting certain hazardous materials.

Summary of Bill: Operators and passengers operating a commercial motor vehicle are not eligible for the medical exception to the safety belt requirement.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Washington State is out of compliance with the code of federal regulations and is subject to losing federal funds. The Washington State Patrol has been working with the federal government to address this issue, but ultimately a change in state law is needed to be in compliance.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Emily Randall, Prime Sponsor; Monica Alexander, Washington State Patrol.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.