

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6224

As Passed Senate, February 7, 1996

Title: An act relating to providing flexibility for vocational rehabilitation benefits within the long-term disability pilot projects.

Brief Description: Exempting long-time disability pilot project participants from an expenditure limitation.

Sponsors: Senators Pelz, Deccio, Wojahn and Newhouse; by request of Department of Labor & Industries.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce & Trade: 1/11/96, 1/15/96 [DP].
Passed Senate, 2/7/96, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE & TRADE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Pelz, Chair; Heavey, Vice Chair; Deccio, Franklin, Fraser, Hale, McDonald and Newhouse.

Staff: Jack Brummel (786-7428)

Background: Under the state workers compensation system, vocational rehabilitation expenditures, including child care and travel, may not exceed \$3,000 in any 52-week period. An additional \$3,000 may be expended in a subsequent 52-week period with the approval of the Director of the Department of Labor and Industries.

The department is operating two pilot projects directed toward the reduction of long-term disability. The pilots use on-the-job training contracts which are subject to the \$3,000 and 52-week limitation. The department asserts that some contracts may call for more than \$3,000 in a shorter time frame than allowed under current law.

Summary of Bill: For injured workers in long-term disability pilot projects, the director may authorize up to \$6,000 for vocational rehabilitation expenditures, not including child care and travel.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 8, 1996.

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

Testimony For: The long-term disability pilots are up and running and need more front end vocational funds to make a difference in long-term disability. This should actually save

money by getting people back to work quicker. We can't reform vocational rehabilitation without addressing claims management. It makes sense to devote more resources to vocational rehabilitation.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Mark Brown, L&I (pro); Clif Finch, AWB (pro); Robert Stern, WA State Labor Council (pro).