

Date of Hearing: May 17, 2017

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher, Chair

AB 1705 (Committee on Business and Professions) – As Amended May 2, 2017

Policy Committee: Business and Professions Vote: 14 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill extends the sunset date for the State Board of Guide Dogs for the Blind (Board) for an additional two years, until January 1, 2020.

It also requires Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) to appoint the members of a task force under the jurisdiction of the board to examine the role and the mission of the board and if there is a continued need for the regulation of guide dog schools, guide dog trainers, and fundraising programs.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Approximately \$214,000 is proposed in the Governor's 2017-18 budget to continue operation of the Board. Annual costs would continue to be incurred in this range for an additional two years (State Board of Guide Dogs for the Blind Fund).
- 2) Minor costs to DCA to convene a task force (Consumer Affairs Fund).

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** This bill extends the sunset for the Board for an additional two years. In early 2017, the Senate Business, Professions, and Economic Development Committee and the Assembly Business and Professions Committee conducted joint oversight hearings to review 12 regulatory entities. Sunset review bills such as this one are intended to implement any changes identified as a result of the hearings and extend regulatory authority for entities reviewed at the hearings.
- 2) **Background.** The Board's primary objectives are to; a) protect the safety of blind guide dog users by ensuring that instructors and schools possess minimum qualifications and are licensed; and b) to enforce licensing standards for performance and conduct. Currently, the Board oversees 103 guide dog instructors, including 47 out-of-state instructors and 3 guide dog schools. The Board annually inspects all schools, requires new active guide dog instructors to take written, practical, and oral examinations, and requires instructors to submit proof of eight hours of continuing education (CE) each year to remain licensed. California is the only State that has such a regulatory program. The sunset review raised several issues, including issues related to an underused arbitration program for guide dog users and guide dog schools, as well as concerns about service dogs, financing, and general operations, among others.

- 3) **Support.** The Board writes in support that it is "working diligently to address issues identified in the sunset report. Primarily, the Board is in the process of working with stakeholders to draft amendments to existing ownership and arbitration laws that enhance consumer protection and we look forward to providing that language as soon as possible."

- 4) **Opposition.** Numerous guide dog users, as well as the National Federation of the Blind California, write in vociferous opposition to the extension of the Board's sunset. They argue the Board does more harm than good, unnecessarily restricts services available to guide dog users, and is a waste of money. They indicate international accreditation standards already provide quality control.

Analysis Prepared by: Lisa Murawski / APPR. / (916) 319-2081