

Date of Hearing: August 3, 2016

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Lorena Gonzalez, Chair

SB 1331 (Pavley) – As Amended June 29, 2016

Policy Committee: Business and Professions Vote: 16 - 0

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

**SUMMARY:** This bill makes several changes pertaining to the Board of Guide Dogs for the Blind (Board). Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Allows out-of-state personnel to provide follow-up services in California without a license under specified conditions, if the out-of-state school is certified by the International Guide Dog Federation.
- 2) Revises the composition of the Board to include three, instead of two, representatives of the legally blind or visually impaired community and requires one representative each from a designated consumer organization representing Californians who are blind or visually impaired, as specified.
- 3) Requires the Board to create a factsheet that provides specified information about the Board which must be made available to each licensed school, which then must provide the fact sheet to every student receiving training from that school.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

Minor and absorbable costs to the Board of Guide Dogs for the Blind.

**COMMENTS:**

- 1) **Purpose.** This bill is sponsored by the California Council of the Blind. According to the author, "Highly trained guide dogs are vital companions for people who are blind or visually impaired. They partner with a guide dog to help them move about safely and independently. This bill seeks to improve services for those who partner with guide dogs by making a number of reforms to the Board that oversees licensing of the services dogs."
- 2) **Background.** The Board was established in 1948 for the purpose of providing well-trained guide dogs to blind persons and training blind persons as guide dog consumers. The Board licenses: a) guide dog schools, b) guide dog instructors, and c) fundraising programs to open new guide dog schools. The Board inspects all schools, requires new active guide dog instructors to take written and practical examinations, and requires instructors to submit proof of eight hours of continuing education each year to remain licensed. The Board's licensing population includes approximately 100 licensees and three California schools.

California is the only state to license and regulate guide dog instructors and guide dog schools. As such, some California residents seek guide dog training services from unlicensed schools outside of California. There are about sixteen guide dog schools across the country. Schools outside of California can obtain California licensure, but there are a few schools

outside of the state that have chosen not to. Current law does not prohibit California-based residents from obtaining services from unlicensed schools or instructors outside of California, but an issue arises when a California resident who obtained training from an out-of-state school seeks to obtain follow-up instruction from the unlicensed school or instructor who provided the original services outside of California. Currently, follow-up services or formal instruction with a client is prohibited in California without a license.

This bill would provide that, with respect to an out-of-state school certified by the International Guide Dog Federation, a staff member of that school could come into California without a license from the Board solely to provide follow-up instruction for the guide dog handler who obtained his or her dog at the out-of-state school. This will enable Californians who have chosen an out-of-state school and who need follow-up instruction often in emergency situations such as the dog having been attacked or been in an accident, to obtain that service.

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