

Date of Hearing: March 29, 2017

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

Adam Gray, Chair

AB 579 (Flora) – As Introduced February 14, 2017

SUBJECT: Apprenticeship: fire protection: firefighter preapprenticeship program

SUMMARY: Would require the Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS), in collaboration with the California Firefighter Joint Apprenticeship Committee (CAL-JAC), to develop a statewide firefighter pre-apprenticeship program (Program) designed to recruit candidates from underrepresented groups. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the program to meet the following requirements:
 - a) Create training and curriculum based on California firefighter standards designed to prepare candidates from underrepresented groups with the skills, competencies, and mentorship needed to pass the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT), and the written tests and oral components common to the California hiring process that are necessary for a candidate to be eligible for consideration and hire with fire protection agencies.
 - b) Provide Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Training to candidates from underrepresented groups, preparing them to meet the necessary minimum qualification required by the majority of fire protection agencies.
- 2) Require CAL-JAC to deliver the pilot classes established by the program using existing facilities and training models.
- 3) Require DAS to provide oversight and technical assistance in the development of the program.
- 4) Defines “underrepresented groups” as groups that CAL-JAC determines are currently underrepresented in the firefighter profession.
- 5) Appropriates \$300,000 from General Fund (GF) to DAS for the purpose of funding the program.
- 6) Limits DAS to using 5% of the funds for direct and indirect expenses incurred in administering the program. All remaining funds must be used to develop and deliver curriculum, other materials, and instructors necessary to implement the pilot program.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Provides for apprenticeship programs within DAS, which is within the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR), sponsored by specific entities and employers, and requires the Chief of DAS to perform various functions with respect to apprenticeship programs and the welfare of apprentices.
- 2) Requires the SFM to establish recommended minimum standards for fire protection personnel at all career levels.

- 3) Under existing law, the Training Regulations of the SFM establish minimum standards for statewide training and certification systems for the California fire service.
- 4) Provides the SFM shall jointly, with the California Professional Firefighters, promote participation in, sponsor, and administer the California Firefighter Joint Apprenticeship Program as the pre-employment recruitment, selection, and training system to be utilized for entry level firefighters.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

Purpose of the bill: According to the Author's Office: "AB 579 will prepare underrepresented groups with the skills, competencies and mentorship needed to pass the physical, written and oral components necessary for a candidate to be eligible for consideration and hire in the firefighting field. AB 579 will help close the skills gap, bring more people into the workforce and provide better career opportunities for all Californians."

"While California's economy has showed moderate growth over the past seven years, it is estimated that more than 1.9 million middle-skill jobs go unfilled due to lack of training and resources. The California Workforce Association states that "between current openings and baby boomer retirements, California businesses expect to have 4.4 million middle skill job openings in the next decade." This includes many fire departments throughout the state are having difficulties filling the void with qualified candidates that reflect the community they serve."

Background: Traditionally, women and minorities have not been exposed to the fire service as a career option. 2016 data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that women make up only 3.5 percent of firefighters nationally. The firefighter profession also sees low numbers in minority racial groups with only 6.8 percent of the workforce made up of African Americans, 1.4 percent Asian, and 7.7 percent Hispanic or Latino.

In California, amongst candidates whom are currently eligible to apply to a department, some group statistics are below the national average. According to numbers provided by the author's office from the Fire Candidate Testing Center (FCTC), women only make up 3% of all candidates. Minority racial groups also see low numbers in eligible candidates with only 4% African American, 4% Asian, and 1% Native American.

California Firefighter Joint Apprenticeship Committee (CAL-JAC): CAL-JAC is co-sponsored by the SFM, representing management, and the California Professional Firefighters, AFL-CIO, representing labor. CAL-JAC, among other things, is responsible for the recruitment and testing of potential firefighter candidates.

In 2005 CAL-JAC created the Commission to Recruit Women for the Fire Service. The Commission's mission is to boost interest and to educate high school- and college-aged women, as well as women transitioning from the military, about the firefighting profession and all the opportunities that are available in the field.

Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS): DAS operates within DIR and administers California's apprenticeship law, the Shelley- Maloney Apprentice Labor Standards Act of 1939, as well as California Apprenticeship Council's (CAC) regulations. As an integral part of the

California workforce development system, the primary responsibilities of DAS are the promotion and development of apprenticeship training programs, the improvement of working conditions for apprentices, and the advancement of subsequent employment opportunities for apprentices. DAS accomplishes these objectives by providing consultative services to apprenticeship program sponsors, employers, employee organizations, and education providers. Additionally, DAS has oversight responsibilities for proper program management of apprenticeship programs, ensuring that high training standards are maintained for all apprentices. DAS monitors apprentice wages, hours, working conditions, learning of skills, length of training, and required supplemental classroom instruction resulting in a healthy rate of program graduations for all apprentices, including women and people of ethnic minorities. Upon recommendation of the apprentice's program sponsor, DAS certifies the completion of apprenticeship programs approved by CAC. For the year 2013, DAS issued 7,122 certificates of completion to graduating apprentices.

Firefighter Candidate Testing: CAL-JAC, through the Firefighter Candidate Testing Center (FCTC), administers and develops two tests for candidates: The Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT), and the FCTC Written Test.

The CPAT is designed to measure an individual's ability to handle the physical demands of being a firefighter. The timed test measures how candidates handle eight separate events, all designed to mirror tasks on the job. Participants in the CPAT must navigate eight separate events on a closed course within a span of 10 minutes and 20 seconds. Each event simulates a physical skill or function that firefighters experience on the job.

The Written Test is developed by CAL-JAC and contains questions and examples tailored to the profession and designed to demonstrate your ability to process information and think critically. The Written Exam is a 100 question, multiple choice test consisting of the following four sections: Recall and Comprehend Verbal and Visual Information; Apply Mechanical Reasoning; Solve Mathematical Problems; and Recall and Comprehend Technical Information from Written Materials. Candidates have 2.5 hours to complete 100 multiple choice questions.

Upon passage of CPAT and Written Test, candidates are placed on the FCTC statewide candidate list, which is used by California fire departments up and down the state during their hiring process. The statewide firefighter pre-apprenticeship program – created by AB 579 – is intended to help candidates from underrepresented groups prepare for and pass the CPAT and Written Test.

State Fire Marshal's State Fire Training Program (SFT): SFT Program is a collaborative effort of the California fire service that work together to design and deliver courses that provide fire service personnel at all levels with the knowledge and skills to do their jobs professionally and safely. Through the efforts of organizations such as the California Fire Chiefs Association, California Professional Firefighters, and the California Fire Technology Directors, individual community colleges and fire departments, courses are delivered to approximately 50,000 students per year. SFT courses are delivered throughout the state and at approximately 52 accredited community colleges and local fire agencies. SFT consists of two main program elements: the California Fire Service Training and Education System (CFSTES) and the Fire Service Training and Education Program (FSTEP).

CFSTES is a system of course delivery and certification. Several certification tracks for both career and volunteer firefighters have been created. Certification criteria consist of prerequisites such as work experience, completing a specific course of study and passing the appropriate

certification examinations. Once completed, fire service personnel may submit for certification in positions such as Firefighter, Apparatus Operator, Company Officer, Chief Fire Officer, Executive Fire Officer, Fire Chief, Instructor, Fire Inspector, Plan Examiner, Fire Marshal, Fire Investigator and Community Risk Officer.

FSTEP is a program that assists local fire agencies in meeting their specific training needs. Courses include, live-fire training, auto extrication and wildland firefighting. Courses delivered through registered instructors may be “custom” tailored to meet each department’s needs.

Support: The California Professional Firefighters state: “AB579 establishes a needed program to prepare underrepresented groups with the skills, competencies, and mentorship needed to pass the physical, written and oral components necessary for a candidate to be eligible for consideration in the firefighting field. This pre-apprenticeship program delivery model will rely on existing delivery methods offered by CAL-JAC, which engage local fire departments, regional fire agencies and educational institutions. In doing so, AB 579 ensures that the program delivered is standardized and consistent statewide. Further, this bill helps close the skills’ gap and provides real opportunities for diversifying California’s fire service. For these reasons, we urge your support for this important bill.”

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Professional Firefighters (Co-Sponsor)
California Fire Chiefs Association
Fire Districts Association of California

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Kenton Stanhope / G.O. / (916) 319-2531