

Public hearing transcript: WAC 308 – Fees

October 11, 2022

Ellis Starrett:

Good morning. This is a public hearing before the Washington State Department of Licensing being held to elicit public testimony, both oral and written with regard to proposed rules regarding fee increases for the various programs that fund the 06L account. This hearing is being held virtually via Zoom at 10:00 AM on October 11th, 2022. Public hearing notice of this hearing was given by notice number WSR 22-18-104 filed with the Code Advisor's office on September 7th, 2022. Copies of the proposed rules are available at dol.wa.gov/about/rules. The sign in sheet, your testimony, and any documents you provide are public documents. This rule is proposed pursuant to the provisions of RCW 43.24.086. Fee policy for professions, occupations, and businesses determined by rule. My name is Ellis Starrett and my title is Rules and Policy Manager. The Director of Licensing has designated me to preside over this hearing. Representatives of the Washington State Department of Licensing are present today if there are any questions. This includes Sarah Pittman, Deputy Assistant Director Parker Teed, Julie [inaudible 00:01:28], Kelsey Stone and Shauna Herron.

The procedure today will be as follows. The department is required to make a record of this hearing by stenographic, mechanical or electronic means. Therefore, we are using audio recording for this hearing. Anyone wishing to testify today should provide your name and contact information in the chat, or vocalize that you wish to testify when called upon. This sheet will be used to call forward the individuals for testimony and is later used to ensure hearing participants are notified of rule making results and the agency's response or comments.

You'll be called to testify in the order in which you have provided your name. To assist in preparing the record for this public hearing, individuals testifying should state their name, who they represent, if they are testifying on behalf of others, and whether they support or oppose the proposed rules. The department has received written comments on these rules. For those wishing to provide written comments here, you can enter them into the chat or you can email them to rules coordinator at dol.wa.gov. Copies of these written comments will be added to the rulemaking file. Now we will hear oral testimony, if any, from those present. Lou would you go ahead and unmute yourself and testify.

Lou:

Hi. Thanks [inaudible 00:02:52], and thank you all for putting this hearing together. My name is Lou Altobelli. I'm a Manager of Advocacy on behalf of the American Society of Travel Advisors. We oppose this rule. We would like to give you a little bit of a background. So American Society Travel Advisors, we're made up of 98% small businesses, travel advisors, 70% majority women owned. And in the State of Washington, there's 6,448 travel agents and 173 member companies. And as a result of Covid, the last time we had this hearing, I believe in 2020, there was \$3.8 billion lost in the tourism sector in Washington. And I remember that fee increase being a little bit more contentious, and there were definitely a lot more voices here at that time. We were thankful that that was delayed. We understand that this is a fee that is part of the process, the last one in 2019.

The proposed rule in 2020 was a \$50 increase, and it was 25% increase across for this travel fee. This one's less. This one is 17% and it's down to \$34 in a time where it's pretty difficult. Right now with our current economy, with the flight inflation, a lot of our advisors are still coming out of the pandemic with a lot of travel plans still yet to be active upon. We have a certain business model to travel where if we sell a client travel to let's say Europe or some other destination, it ends up being a commission down the

line, so they don't get paid right away. So travel is in effect sort of a delayed process and not the best time for us to have a fee increase. And as you might expect, we would oppose. And like we said, and lastly, we understand that this fee increase comes around every year, and we just hope that it can maintain and not force any more burden on our industry.

Thank you.

Ellis Starrett:

Thank you so much, Lou, and I really appreciate your testimony. And if there are additional comments from any of your colleagues, please make sure that they email the rules coordinator at dol.wa.gov address, or you have my email and you're welcome to have folks email me directly. I'd love to make sure that we're just capturing all those comments. So thank you so much for your testimony. Just in case there's any glitches in the technology, I just want to ask if there's anyone else here wishing to testify today? All right. Hearing none, I just want to thank you for your comments. The department will prepare a concise explanatory statement, which will among other things, summarize all the oral and written comments received regarding the proposed rules and respond to them by category or subject matter. Copies of the concise explanatory statement will be forwarded to all those who have made oral or written comments, and we'll also be posting it on our website. I am going to now stop the recording and this hearing is adjourned.