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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 6512**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2016 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Baumgartner and Conway)

AN ACT Relating to requiring that a percentage of state need grant recipients be pursuing degrees in STEM subjects; creating new sections; and providing an expiration date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that Washington is a hub for job opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The state has the highest percentage of people working in STEM fields, according to the technology alliance, but ranks fortieth in STEM master's degrees held by twenty-four to thirty-four year olds and thirtieth for STEM PhDs.

The legislature finds that it is important to understand current efforts to increase STEM production at the state's public institutions of higher education. This includes knowing both the existing opportunities and challenges for low-income students to pursue degrees in these fields.

Therefore, the legislature intends to determine the percentage of state need grant recipients currently enrolled in a program of study in the STEM field as well as existing obstacles that could prevent even higher enrollment in these programs.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) A work group is created to study the relationship between state need grants and the pursuit of degrees in STEM fields.

(a) The work group shall include one representative from each of the four-year institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, the state board for community and technical colleges, and the student achievement council.

(b) The work group may invite, at its discretion, representatives from other public and private Washington institutions of higher education and agencies to provide advice and expertise.

(2) The purpose of the work group is to:

(a) Analyze data to determine the percentage of students that are receiving state need grant funding and pursuing a degree in STEM fields;

(b) Identify challenges or obstacles that prevent students receiving state need grant funding from pursuing STEM degree programs;

(c) Evaluate how public and private institutions of higher education in other states have increased enrollments in STEM degree programs among middle and lower-income student populations; and

(d) Develop recommendations that would effectively increase the overall rate of state need grant students participating in STEM degree programs.

(3) The work group shall report to the legislature and the institutions of higher education on its findings and recommendations by December 31, 2016.

(4) This section expires August 1, 2017.

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