

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5497

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Early Learning & K-12 Education, January 28, 2022

**Title:** An act relating to extending voting authority to student members on the state board of education.

**Brief Description:** Extending voting authority to student members on the state board of education.

**Sponsors:** Senators Wilson, C., Nobles, Conway, Das, Hunt, Lovelett, Lovick, Nguyen, Saldaña and Wellman; by request of State Board of Education.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/12/22, 1/28/22 [DPS, DNP].

**Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill**

- Grants voting privileges to student members of the State Board of Education (SBE).
- Requires student members of the SBE to excuse themselves from voting on matters directly relating to graduation requirement changes that apply to their school and graduating class.
- Modifies SBE quorum requirements for the transaction of business.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5497 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair, K-12; Wilson, C., Vice Chair, Early Learning; Hunt, Mullet and Pedersen.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

Signed by Senators Hawkins, Ranking Member; Dozier and McCune.

**Staff:** Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

**Background:** State Board of Education. The 16-member State Board of Education (SBE) is comprised of five members elected by geographic regions by school board directors, one member elected by private school directors, seven members appointed by the Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and two non-voting student members selected in a manner determined by the SBE.

The SBE has various duties and powers prescribed in statute, including:

- providing advocacy and strategic oversight of public education;
- establishing high school graduation requirements or equivalencies;
- identifying scores students must meet to achieve standards on statewide assessments;
- and
- approving and accrediting private schools according to requirements established by the SBE.

All members except the student members are voting members. Eight voting members of the Board constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

**Summary of Bill (First Substitute):** All members of the SBE are considered voting members, including student members. The quorum requirement for the transaction of business is changed from eight voting members to nine members.

A student member shall excuse themselves from voting on matters directly relating to graduation requirement changes that apply to the student's school and graduating class. In the event of a student member excusing themselves, eight voting members of the board constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

**EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE (First Substitute):**

- Requires student members to excuse themselves from voting on matters directly relating to graduation requirement changes that apply to their school and graduating class.
- Adjusts quorum requirements.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill:** *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: Advocates are concerned that student voices are not authentically being heard in State Board of Education policy decisions. The involvement of students on the SBE is critical as educational policies should be student-centered. It is critical that future student members and all students have a strong voice in educational decisions. Students should be seen and heard as equals in educational decision-making. Giving students voting authority would allow them to be equal partners in education. This legislation would place pressure on local school boards to give greater recognition to student voices. Granting students voting authority would help students have greater trust in decisions made by the State Board of Education.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Claire Wilson, Prime Sponsor; Carissa Crum, Washington State Legislative Youth Advisory Council; Shreya Shaji, Legislative Youth Advisory Council; Sol Rabinovich; J. Lee Schultz, State Board of Education; McKenna Roberts, State Board of Education, Association of Washington Student Leaders; Pavan Venkatakrishnan, State Board of Education, Association of Washington Student Leaders; Jared Mason-Gere, Washington Education Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.