
HOUSE BILL 1555

State of Washington

67th Legislature

2021 Regular Session

By Representatives Chase, McCaslin, Klicker, and Sutherland

Read first time 03/12/21. Referred to Committee on Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to the freedom in education program; adding a new
2 section to chapter 2A.150 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 43.08
3 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 43.09 RCW; and creating new
4 sections.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature acknowledges that many
7 parents desire to homeschool their children or wish to send them to a
8 private school. Parents' reasons for preferring a venue of education
9 other than public school are varied and may be motivated by religious
10 or moral convictions. Despite the desire to choose an educational
11 environment that best meets their children's needs, very few parents
12 have the financial means to afford the substantial costs of
13 homeschooling or private schooling. The legislature recognizes that
14 if the state provided a program to alleviate some of these education
15 costs, parents who prefer a different venue for their children's
16 education would have new opportunities to choose homeschooling or
17 private schooling.

18 (2) The legislature finds that, in the 2020-21 school year, the
19 state's public school per-pupil funding amount is \$12,519. The
20 legislature believes that providing up to 50 percent of this amount
21 in the form of reimbursement for educational goods and services

1 purchased by parents for the benefit of their children will allow
2 parents the freedom to choose the best, rather than the least
3 expensive, venue of education for their children.

4 (3) Furthermore, the legislature expects that providing such
5 reimbursements will both save the state a significant amount of money
6 and provide a measure of competition that will improve public
7 schools.

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 2A.150
9 RCW to read as follows:

10 (1) The freedom in education program is established to reimburse
11 parents with students enrolled in an elementary or secondary private
12 school or who provide home-based instruction for their children for
13 the costs of educational goods and services.

14 (2) The state auditor shall develop and administer the
15 reimbursement program with, at a minimum, the following elements:

16 (a) A process for participating parents to submit claims for
17 reimbursement of tuition, training, software, books, subscriptions,
18 tutoring, and other educational goods and services purchased for the
19 benefit of an eligible student;

20 (b) A system to receive, verify, and track receipts for
21 educational goods and services expenses incurred by participating
22 parents;

23 (c) A method to calculate the maximum annual reimbursement per
24 eligible student, which must be 50 percent of the state's public
25 school per-pupil funding amount for the school year in which
26 reimbursement is requested, less an administrative fee of up to two
27 percent. The maximum annual reimbursement per eligible student must
28 be prorated if the eligible student was enrolled in a public school
29 for part of the school year. The purpose of the administrative fee is
30 to cover the costs to the state auditor and the state treasurer in
31 administering the reimbursement program.

32 (3) On a monthly basis, the state auditor must communicate to the
33 state treasurer the reimbursement amount to be paid to each
34 participating parent, and the state treasurer must issue to each
35 participating parent a state treasury warrant in the specified
36 amount.

37 (4) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this
38 section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

1 (a) "Eligible student" means a person residing in Washington who
2 is eligible to attend a public school in Washington.

3 (b) "Home-based instruction" has the same meaning as in RCW
4 28A.225.010.

5 (c) "Parent" means a parent, guardian, or other person or entity
6 having legal custody of an eligible student.

7 (d) "Participating parent" means a parent who has enrolled an
8 eligible student in a private school or who provides home-based
9 instruction to an eligible student in compliance with the
10 requirements of RCW 28A.225.010 and 28A.200.010.

11 (e) "Private school" means a school approved under chapter
12 28A.195 RCW.

13 (f) "Public school" has the same meaning as in RCW 28A.150.010.

14 (g) "Reimbursement program" means the freedom in education
15 program established in this section.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 43.08
17 RCW to read as follows:

18 (1) The state treasurer shall issue state treasury warrants as
19 required under section 2 of this act from appropriations made for
20 this specific purpose.

21 (2) The state treasurer may adopt rules necessary to carry out
22 its responsibilities under section 2 of this act.

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 43.09
24 RCW to read as follows:

25 (1) The state auditor shall develop and administer the freedom in
26 education program established in section 2 of this act.

27 (2) The state auditor may adopt rules necessary to carry out its
28 responsibilities under section 2 of this act.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** This act may be known and cited as the
30 freedom in education act.

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