

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1845

As Reported By House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to making certain benefits provided by colleges to students optional.

Brief Description: Making certain benefits provided by institutions of higher education to students optional.

Sponsors: Representatives D. Schmidt, Thompson, Fuhrman, L. Thomas, Blanton, Radcliff, Mason, Benton, Reams, Mitchell, McMorris, Backlund, Beeksa, McMahan, Smith, Sherstad and Lambert.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/21/95, 2/24/95, 2/28/95 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Carlson, Chairman; Mulliken, Vice Chairman; Benton; Blanton; Delvin; Goldsmith and Sheahan.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Jacobsen, Ranking Minority Member; Mason, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Basich and Mastin.

Staff: Marilee Scarbrough (786-7196).

Background: Currently, governing boards may make available liability, life, health, or accident insurance for regents, trustees and students of the institution. The cost of the insurance is borne by the student, trustee, or regent. The institutions may also make available liability insurance for employees, the cost of the employee liability insurance must be born by the university or college.

Prior to 1993, institutions considered research and teaching assistants ineligible for state health care benefits. In 1993, legislation was enacted allowing four year institutions to provide health care benefits for graduate students holding graduate service appointments.

Summary of Substitute Bill: All insurance benefits that require premium payments from a student are optional. Additionally, the student health fee is optional for students who provide proof of health care coverage.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute provides that student health fees are optional for students who provide proof of continuous health care coverage.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The health fee should be optional so students do not pay twice for insurance. A traditional student may already be covered by insurance owned by parents. Non-traditional students already have their own health care coverage. The current services at the student health center do not meet students needs.

Testimony Against: We are concerned that the support for student health centers will decrease if the fee is not mandatory. The mandatory fee supports a healthy population for everyone on campus. Giving students an option will drastically decrease services. Health centers provide some services that are not covered by traditional insurance, therefore it is not duplicative. Students who have health care coverage are not guaranteed that their provider is located in the area where they attend school. Additionally, it can be difficult in a small community for a student to find a health care provider who is willing to take him or her as a patient.

Testified: On original bill: Representative Dave Schmidt, prime sponsor; and Glenn Colbert, Washington Student Lobby (pro). On the proposed substitute: Brad Boswell and Johan Hellman, Washington Student Lobby (con); Martha Lindley, Central Washington University (con); Terry Teale, Council of Presidents (con); Andrew McWilliam, University of Washington Graduate and Professional Student Senate (con); Larry Ganders, Washington State University (con); and George Durrie, Eastern Washington University (con).