

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6660

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, February 2, 1996

Title: An act relating to mandatory school attendance.

Brief Description: Lowering the age for mandatory school attendance.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Pelz, Haugen, Sheldon, Winsley and Kohl.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 2/1/96, 2/2/96 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6660 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Goings, Vice Chair; Finkbeiner, Johnson, Pelz and Rasmussen.

Staff: Leslie Goldstein (786-7424)

Background: Under current law, children in Washington are not required to start school until the age of eight. The age when children are required to start school varies in other states. Puerto Rico and Pennsylvania do not require children to start until the age of eight. Seven states require children to attend school at age five. Eighteen states and American Samoa require children to begin school at age six. Twenty-two states require children to begin school at age seven.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The age when children are required to attend school is lowered from eight to six. This change does not affect children who are home schooled. Compliance with the laws requiring children who are home schooled to register, take an annual test, or keep records is not required until the age of eight.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The change in the age of compulsory attendance does not affect children who are receiving home-based instruction.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: It is important for children to be in school. An early education is important, particularly for those children who do not have a strong home environment.

Testimony Against: This legislation only addresses the small number of children who are not in school or receiving home-based instruction. Many children are not ready to receive a formal education until the age of eight. Unless amended to exclude home schoolers, this would have a negative impact on home schoolers.

Testified: Jean Ameluxen, OSPI (pro); Walter Ball, AWSP (pro); Teresa Sparling, President, Homeschoolers Support Association (con).