

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1662

As Reported By House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to higher education tuition.

Brief Description: Establishing tuition fees.

Sponsors: Representatives Sheahan, Butler, Mason and Dunn.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/11/97, 2/12/97, 2/21/97 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Carlson, Chairman; Radcliff, Vice Chairman; Dunn; Sheahan and Van Luven.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Mason, Ranking Minority Member; Kenney, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Butler and O'Brien.

Staff: Suzi Morrissey (786-7120).

Background: Washington is one of a handful of states in which the Legislature determines tuition rates by law. From the early 1980s through 1995, students paid a statutory percentage of the cost of their education as tuition. The percentage varied by type of public institution and student category. Tuition rates were automatically adjusted based on the amount it had cost to educate students during the previous biennium. During the 1995 legislative session, that method of determining tuition was repealed. For the 1995-97 biennium, tuition rates are a set dollar amount written into law. There is no statutory method for determining tuition rates after the 1996-97 academic year.

Summary of Substitute Bill: During the 1997-98 and 1998-99 academic years, tuition will increase by 4 percent per year. The Legislature intends that the general tax support for higher education change to reflect an increase of at least 1 percent per year in the ratio of tax support to tuition.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Tuition is not to be frozen for the 1997-98 academic year. During the 1998-99 academic year, it will increase 4 percent rather than an amount that does not exceed 3 percent. There is no language that limits the rate of tuition increases after the 1998-99 academic year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 5, 1997.

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

Testimony For Original Bill: Washington's students and their families need tuition rates that are affordable, predictable, and stable. Providing a tuition system that increases rates by a low to moderate amount over a long period of time will help families plan for the cost of higher education. It also will provide the colleges and universities with an estimate of tuition revenue that can be used for budgeting and planning. Washington's erratic pattern of tuition increases over the past few years has had a negative effect on some students, parents, and institutions. Many students and some college officials believe that low tuition is the best form of financial aid. The revenue generated by the proposal may not be enough to meet the needs of institutions of higher education over time. Therefore, any increases in tuition should be tied to an index, such as the Consumer Price Index, with a maximum increase of 4 or 5 percent in any year.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Bruce Eklund, Washington Student Lobby (pro); Amit Ranade, Washington Student Lobby (pro); Keith Boyd, Washington Student Lobby (pro); Scott Morgan, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (pro with concerns); Larry Ganders, Washington State University (pro with concerns); Sam Singla (pro with concerns); Kim Merriman, The Evergreen State College (pro with concerns); Martha Lindley (pro with concerns); Matt Caires, President, Associated Students of Washington State University (pro); Daniel Burgau, student, Clark College (pro with concerns); Eric Woldeit, Associated Students of the University of Washington (pro); and Melissa Chiechi, Washington Student Lobby (pro with concerns).