

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Representative Don Carlson, Chair

BILL ANALYSIS
HB 1551

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: Increasing fiscal flexibility for institutions of higher education.

BACKGROUND: Public baccalaureate institutions and community colleges may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for students through approximately 35 different tuition waiver programs. There is a statutory maximum on the amount of operating fee revenue that each baccalaureate institution and the community colleges as a whole may waive. The waiver cap ranges from a high of 35 percent for community colleges to a low of 6 percent for The Evergreen State College. There is statutory intent language that suggests that the Legislature will not reduce state support for institutions that do not waive the entire amount of revenue permitted under the cap.

Most waiver programs are designed to help a student with particular circumstances. For example, waivers are permitted for needy students, teaching and research assistants working half-time or more, the children of deceased and disabled firefighters and law enforcement officials, a stipulated number of international students, and active duty military personnel, to name a few. Only one program gives the institutions the flexibility to waive tuition and fees for students with no special circumstances. Under this program, baccalaureate institutions may waive up to 1 percent of their operating fee revenue for any student, except on the basis of intercollegiate athletics. Community colleges have the same authority, but their revenue limit under this program is three-fourths of 1 percent of their operating fee revenue.

SUMMARY: Each baccalaureate institution may use up to 2 percent of the institution's operating fee revenue to waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for any student, except on the basis of intercollegiate athletics. This authority is subject to the existing statutory waiver cap in effect for each institution.