

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1879

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Transportation

**Title:** An act relating to funding driver's education.

**Brief Description:** Providing a funding source to assist students with driver's education costs.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Murray, Hankins, Cody, Simpson, Schual-Berke, Ericks, Chase, Hasegawa and Wood.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Transportation: 3/2/05, 3/7/05 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Provides funding for traffic safety education for all students through the assessment of a \$3 fee on each license plate issued.
- Allows the Superintendent of Public Instruction to retain up to 5 percent of the fees collected to cover administrative expenses related to the allocation of funds.
- Directs the board of directors of school districts to set a reduced fee for traffic safety instruction for low-income students.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Murray, Chair; Wallace, Vice Chair; Woods, Ranking Minority Member; Skinner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Dickerson, Flannigan, Hankins, Hudgins, Jarrett, Lovick, Morris, Sells, Simpson, B. Sullivan, Takko, Upthegrove and Wood.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Buck, Campbell, Curtis, Ericksen, Kilmer, Nixon, Rodne, Schindler and Shabro.

**Staff:** David Munnecke (786-7315).

**Background:**

Traffic safety education is provided to students in most school districts in the state. Historically, these programs have been funded through a mixture of funds provided by the

state, the school district, and individual students' families. Until recently, state funds have been available to support all such traffic safety education programs, and an additional amount has been available specifically to reduce these fees for low-income students. During the 2001-2003 biennium, state funding for these programs was eliminated. As a result, approximately 35 school districts have reported dropping their traffic safety program due to lack of funding.

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The bill places a \$3 fee on each license plate issued at either initial vehicle registration or upon periodic replacement of license plates to be placed in the Public Safety and Education Account (PSEA). The revenues generated from this fee are to be used only for lowering the cost of traffic safety education programs accredited by school districts. The Superintendent of Public Instruction must determine the per-pupil reimbursement rate, and is allowed to deduct no more than 5 percent of the fees collected under this bill to cover the administrative costs associated with allocating these funds.

The board of directors of each school district or combination of school districts, currently required to set the traffic safety education fee, are also required by this bill to set a reduced fee for low-income students.

A "low-income student" is a student who qualifies to receive school lunches on a reduced-cost or free basis.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

School districts are required to offer students the option of either enrolling in school-based driver's education or taking scholarships to attend commercial driver's training schools. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction is required to report to the Legislative Transportation Committees regarding the expenditure of the funds collected and the number of students applying for and receiving the funds collected.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2005.

**Testimony For:** (In support) There should be a funding source to pay for traffic safety education. The funding for traffic safety education was cut the same year that the intermediate driver's license and primary seatbelt laws were passed. Prior to the cut in funding, Washington had one of the best traffic safety education programs in the country. Since then, 80 school districts have cut traffic safety education programs entirely. Traffic safety education and the intermediate license law work together very powerfully. Children and parents should

be accountable, but without funding, kids won't learn how to drive. Disabled students in particular are helped by school based driver's training where the training is integrated across the curriculum. Any driver education program must have high standards, and the funding should be tied to outcome. Teaching kids to drive is an investment in the future.

(Neutral) Approximately 88,000 sophomores will get driver's training this year and about 53,000 of them will receive it from commercial driving schools. If this bill passes many students will have to leave their districts to receive driver's training at a school with a program. Other schools will receive subsidies that will give them an unfair advantage.

If people can't afford insurance then they shouldn't drive, and if they can't afford training, then they can't afford insurance. If commercial schools are forced to compete with public schools with subsidized driver's training programs, they will have to cut their programs. We would support a program that gives kids a voucher so they can have a choice of where to go.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Dr. Terry Bergeson, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Gerald Apple, Students Against Drunk Driving, Traffic Safety Education of Shelton and Employment Security Department; Alex Hansen, Washington Traffic Safety Education Association; Steve Lind, Washington Traffic Safety Association; and Dave Overstreet, American Automobile Association.

(Neutral) Don Munro and Tom Harms, Washington Professional Traffic Safety Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.