

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6620

As of January 25, 2006

Title: An act relating to eliminating the certificate of academic achievement as a requirement for high school graduation.

Brief Description: Eliminating the certificate of academic achievement as a requirement for high school graduation.

Sponsors: Senators Rasmussen, Pridemore and Benton.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 1/19/06.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, public school students must meet the state standard on the 10th grade Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) to earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) and graduate from high school, except for eligible special education students for whom the WASL is not appropriate. If it is determined by the student's Individualized Education Program team that the WASL is not appropriate for the student, even with accommodations, then the student will demonstrate his/her skill and knowledge using other measures and obtain a Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA). Students are expected to obtain the CAA at about the age of sixteen.

Student transcripts are required to display the highest WASL scale score and level, and, if the student achieves level four the first time that the student takes a content area of the WASL, the transcript will include a scholar's designation.

Summary of Bill: The CAA and the CIA are eliminated as high school graduation requirements. The expectation language that a student would achieve a CAA at about the age of sixteen is removed. The requirements for student transcripts to display the highest WASL scale score and level and the scholar's designation is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 17, 2007.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: The WASL is a great tool. But each student learns differently and should be tested differently. Just one test, including the WASL, is not right for every student. We need to hold the teachers accountable for every student not just the ones that can take a paper and

pencil test. We need to get rid of the WASL because it unfairly is a roadblock to graduation. Children are the most important gift to our future. We need to give them all that they need to be successful including things we test on the WASL, like reading, writing, and math but also things that we don't test, including the arts and vocational education.

Testimony Against: We strongly believe that students should be held to high standards and that educators should give students the minimum skills that they need to be successful in the future. This bill would have a negative impact on the positive changes that are occurring in our schools because of the WASL. The WASL has changed the focus in schools from teaching to learning. To have excellence you must have high expectations and believe in our kids. They can rise to the challenge. We urge you to stay the course and have faith in our educators and students. Our WASL scores are improving because we have extraordinary teachers who have revised their curriculum and improved their instruction. The WASL identified where we were failing. The standards that are tested on the WASL are the skills that students need to compete in the real world. We must give students the tools for success, it is a matter of social justice.

Testimony Other: Our children are not getting the quality education that they should. The standard of the WASL is way above what the children are being taught.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Marilyn Rasmussen, prime sponsor; Verna Powell, Winlock PTSA; and Rachel Debells, Parent Empowerment Network.

CON: Paula Quinn, Principal, Lydia Hawk Elementary; Colleen Nelson, Principal, Northwood Middle School; Arcella Hall, Principal, Grandview High School; Marcia Fromhold, Evergreen school district; and Ross Gallagher, Shelton school district.

OTHER: Alton McDonald, National Action Network.

Signed in, Unable to Testify & Submitted Written Testimony: Nancy Vernon, independent researcher.