

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6074

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to improving educational outcomes for homeless students.

Brief Description: Enacting provisions to improve educational outcomes for homeless students.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Frockt, O'Ban, Mullet, Litzow, Rolfs, Fain, Billig, Rivers, Hasegawa, Kohl-Welles, Conway, Keiser, McAuliffe, Darneille, Fraser, Ranker, Kline and Brown).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/24/14, 2/26/14 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to report data on homeless students, which must be disaggregated by subgroups of students at both the state and district levels, to the Governor and the Legislature.
- Requires the OSPI to post on its website a short video that provides information on identifying and providing support to homeless students, and why these activities are critical to student success.
- Requires the OSPI to adopt and distribute best practices for choosing and training district-designated homeless student liaisons.
- Requires school districts to report the dropout rates for homeless students in grades 7 through 12 to the OSPI.
- Requires school districts to strongly encourage additional training for staff and homeless student liaisons annually.
- Requires school districts to include information about services and support for homeless students in existing information distributed with enrollment or annual information.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Stonier, Vice Chair; Dahlquist, Ranking Minority Member; Magendanz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Fey, Haigh, Hargrove, Hawkins, Hayes, S. Hunt, Klippert, Lytton, Muri, Orwall, Parker, Pollet, Seaquist and Warnick.

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

The federal McKinney-Vento Act requires local school districts to identify homeless students and provide them with support. Between 2005 and 2011, the number of homeless students identified in the State of Washington increased by 96 percent, to 27,300.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is the agency charged with overseeing K-12 public education in Washington. The OSPI submits a report to the Legislature each year, accounting for the educational progress of each student in the state. One component of these reports is the dropout rates for students in grades 7 through 12 by ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and disability status. The dropout rates for homeless students are not currently tracked or reported. The OSPI also tracks and reports transportation expenditures, including additional expenditures for transporting homeless students.

All school districts are required to post the educational rights of homeless students in all school buildings and throughout the community. The OSPI has a variety of posters related to this subject available on its website for free ordering or printing.

The OSPI has established a variety of programs that provide educational support and opportunities for students, including the Learning Assistance Program, the Highly Capable Program, and the Running Start Program.

Summary of Bill:

The OSPI must report data on homeless students to the Governor and the Legislature beginning January 10, 2015, and each odd-numbered year thereafter. This report should be disaggregated by subgroups of students, at both the state and district level, and include the following:

- the number of identified homeless students enrolled in public schools;
- the number of students participating in the Learning Assistance Program, the Highly Capable Program, and the Running Start Program; and
- the academic performance and educational outcomes of homeless students.

Rather than providing expenditures for tracking homeless students to the Council on Coordinated Transportation, the OSPI must post this information on its website.

In their annual report to the OSPI, the school districts must report dropout rates for identified homeless students in grades 7 through 12, in addition to the previously required data on the educational progress of each student.

By July 1, 2014, the OSPI must adopt and distribute to each school district the best practices for choosing and training school district-designated homeless student liaisons, and must collaborate with community experts on homelessness and homeless education policy to develop or acquire a short video to be posted on the OSPI's website. The video must provide information on identifying and providing support to homeless students, and why these activities are critical to student success.

On an annual basis, the school districts are required to strongly encourage an all-school staff review of the video, and a state training for the district-designated homeless student liaisons. The school districts must include information about services and support for homeless students in existing materials shared with students at the beginning of the school year or at enrollment. School districts may use the brochure posted on the OSPI's website and are strongly encouraged to use a variety of communications each year, including:

- distributing and collecting an annual housing intake survey;
 - providing parent brochures directly to students and families;
 - announcing the information at school-wide assemblies; or
 - posting information on the district's website or linking to the OSPI's website.
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Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The main purpose of the bill is to focus attention on the homeless student issue. The student stories heard in the earlier public hearings were very compelling. The Senate provided funding for this bill in its operating budget, which will allow the OSPI to do the data collection required by this bill. The 2012-13 school year count for identified homeless students in public schools is 30,609. This represents an increase of 12 percent from the previous year. This bill is a common, positive first step to raise awareness and develop data-driven solutions to serve these students.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Frockt, prime sponsor; and Rachel Cullen, University of Washington Children and Youth Legislative Advocacy Clinic.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.