

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6466

As Passed House:
March 2, 2016

Title: An act relating to student services for students with disabilities.

Brief Description: Creating a work group to develop a plan for removing obstacles for higher education students with disabilities.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Habib, Dammeier, Darneille, Lias, Roach, Keiser, Frockt, Becker, Hasegawa, Conway and McAuliffe).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/23/16, 2/24/16 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/2/16, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Council of Presidents to convene a work group to develop a plan for removing obstacles for students with disabilities transferring between institutions of higher education.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Zeiger, Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Frame, Hargrove, Holy, Reykdal, Sells, Stambaugh, Tarleton and Van Werven.

Staff: Trudes Tango (786-7384).

Background:

In general, federal and state laws prohibit discrimination against students on the basis of disability. Postsecondary schools are required to provide equal access to education to

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students with disabilities through academic adjustments and auxiliary aids and services. In addition, postsecondary schools must ensure physical access to buildings on campus.

Under state law, each public institution of higher education must ensure that students with disabilities are reasonably accommodated within that institution. The institution must provide students with disabilities with the appropriate core services necessary to ensure equal access. The student is entitled to receive a core service if the service is reasonably needed to accommodate the student's disability. The student must make a reasonable request for core services in a timely manner and the institution must respond reasonably and in a timely manner.

Core services include such things as: flexible procedures in the admissions process and test taking; sign language or other interpreter services; textbooks and other education materials in large print, braille, electronic format or audiotape; provisions for a reader, note taker, scribe or proofreader; and referral to appropriate campus resources. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities must be provided as appropriate for all aspects of college and university life, including recruitment, applications, enrollment, registration, financial aid, coursework, research, academic counseling, housing programs, and nonacademic services.

The Council of Presidents is an association of the state's six public baccalaureate degree granting colleges and universities that collaborates and coordinates issues on behalf of those institutions.

Summary of Bill:

The Council of Presidents must convene a work group to develop a plan for removing obstacles for students with disabilities transferring between institutions of higher education. The work group must include at least two students with disabilities, selected by statewide student associations. The work group must also include representatives from:

- the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges;
- The Evergreen State College, the regional universities, and the state universities;
- the Washington Student Achievement Council; and
- statewide student associations.

The plan must focus on removing obstacles for students with disabilities who are transferring between institutions of higher education. The focus must include, but not be limited to: standardizing medical documentation requirements, standardizing intake and review procedures, and developing best practices for institutions to provide outreach to students and help prepare students for transmitting information and documentation to their new institutions of higher education.

The Council of Presidents must provide the plan to the higher education committees of the Legislature by December 31, 2016. The provision creating the work group expires August 1, 2017.

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) This bill is identical to what the House of Representatives passed. It strikes a balance between giving institutions flexibility and addressing accommodations that will work for students. It requires there to be a plan so that when students with disabilities transfer to different schools, there will be fewer barriers. Stakeholders worked with the Council of Presidents on this bill. The bill requires that the work group include students with disabilities, which is very important. Since people have been working on this bill, students with disabilities have begun to tell their stories. It has been an invisible problem before.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Habib, prime sponsor; Cody Eccles, Council of Presidents; Abner Pagunuran, Bellevue College and Washington Student Association; and Elissa Goss, Washington Student Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.