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**SENATE BILL 5538**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2019 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Braun, Fortunato, and Wilson, L.

AN ACT Relating to free speech controls at institutions of higher education; adding a new section to chapter 28B.10 RCW; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature finds that expressive activities protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and Article I, section 5 of the state Constitution include, but are not limited to: Any lawful oral or written communication of ideas, including all forms of peaceful assembly, protests, and speeches; distributing literature; carrying signs; circulating petitions; and the recording and publication, including the internet publication, of video or audio recorded in outdoor areas of campus. The legislature also finds that protected, expressive activities do not include commercial speech.

(2) The legislature finds that a person who wishes to engage in an expressive activity in outdoor areas of campus at a public or private institution of higher education may do so freely, spontaneously, and contemporaneously as long as the person's conduct is lawful and does not materially and substantially disrupt the functioning of the public or private institution of higher education or infringe upon the rights of other individuals or organizations to engage in expressive activities.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28B.10 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Restrictions on speech and use of public space at a public or private institution of higher education must be clear and published and must provide for ample alternative means of expression.

(2) Outdoor areas of campus are considered traditional public forums for individuals, organizations, and guest speakers. A public or private institution of higher education may create and enforce restrictions that are reasonable and content-neutral regarding time, place, and manner of expression and that are narrowly tailored to a significant institutional interest.

(a) Restrictions of expressive activities to a particular outdoor area of campus are not reasonable.

(b) Restrictions under this section must allow members of the public or private institution of higher education community to spontaneously and contemporaneously assemble. Restrictions must be well-defined and published, at a minimum, on the web site of the public or private institution of higher education and as part of any printed materials covering the rules and policies of the public or private institution of higher education.

(3) Students, faculty, or staff of a public or private institution of higher education may not cause material and substantial disruption of previously scheduled or reserved activities on campus occurring at the same time or of the daily orderly operation of the public or private institution of higher education.

(4) For the purposes of this section:

(a) "Material and substantial disruption" means any conduct that intentionally and significantly hinders another person's or group's expressive rights. "Material and substantial disruption" does not include conduct that is protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and Article I of the state Constitution including, but not limited to, lawful protests and counterprotests in the outdoor areas of campus or minor, brief, or fleeting nonviolent disruptions that are isolated or brief in duration.

(b) "Outdoor areas of campus" means generally accessible areas of a campus at a public or private institution of higher education in which members of the campus community are commonly allowed, including grassy areas, walkways, or other similar common areas. "Outdoor areas of campus" does not include outdoor areas of campus to which access is restricted.

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