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**SENATE BILL 5859**

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

**By** Senators Mullet, Salomon, Wilson, C., Nguyen, and Wellman

AN ACT Relating to improving high school graduation success by investing in educational mentor programs; adding a new section to chapter 28A.600 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature has established that the purpose of a high school diploma is to declare that a student is ready for success in postsecondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship. According to the office of the superintendent of public instruction, one in five high school seniors does not graduate on time. Lack of a high school diploma, or its equivalent, can have lifelong, negative financial, social, and health-related impacts. The legislature recognizes that the benefits of high school graduation are numerous for young people and their communities, and as a result, communities have a shared stake in supporting high school students, especially those from underrepresented populations, in their efforts to graduate from high school.

(2)(a) The legislature recognizes that community-based mentoring is an effective strategy for improving high school graduation rates and academic achievement. Mentorships are generally a match between a mentor and one or more mentees, where the mentor provides guidance and support one-on-one or in small groups. Mentors are role models, advisers, and advocates.

(b) Mentors who intervene when a student exhibits early warning signs for not completing high school can help the student identify and overcome barriers to academic success. Pairing a young person with a supportive, nonfamily member can significantly and positively affect that young person's path to adulthood. Mentors can provide personal and social support, as well as academic and career guidance. For example, a mentor can guide a student to continue their education past high school in a manner that is most appropriate for the student, thus improving the student's lifelong earning potential.

(c) Research indicates that strong mentorship programs can improve academic performance. A mentorship with a committed, caring adult from a student's community can also increase the student's self-confidence, resiliency, and problem solving and conflict resolution skills. In addition, participating in a mentorship program can improve students' attitudes about school attendance and completion, improve their social skills and behavior, strengthen their peer and family relationships, and increase their sense of belonging in school. Thus, mentorships can be transformational experiences that provide students with the skills and knowledge they need for future postsecondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship.

(3) The legislature intends to improve high school graduation rates for high school students from underrepresented populations by investing in educational community-based mentorship programs.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.600 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The educational mentor grant program is created to increase graduation rates for high school students from underrepresented populations by expanding the programs of community-based organizations that match participating students with a committed, caring adult from the student's community.

(2)(a) By August 1, 2019, and by August 1st every three years thereafter, the office of the superintendent of public instruction must select, through an application process developed for this purpose, two community-based organizations that meet the requirements of this subsection. A selected organization must:

(i) Have demonstrated success in offering a research-based mentorship program that increases high school graduation rates for students from underrepresented populations;

(ii) Demonstrate capacity to expand the mentorship program;

(iii) Match participating high school students from underrepresented populations with committed, caring adults from the students' communities;

(iv) Agree to screen and train adults before matching them with students;

(v) Introduce students to a variety of postsecondary school options and ensure that every participating senior has a posthigh school plan for economic stability;

(vi) Maintain cash or in-kind donations from private sources; and

(vii) Agree to collaborate with the office of the superintendent of public instruction to create the report required under subsection (5) of this section, by, for example, administering a student satisfaction survey.

(b) One of the selected organizations must primarily serve students east of the crest of the Cascade mountain range and the other must primarily serve students west of the crest of the Cascade mountain range. One of the selected organizations must primarily serve students from rural areas and the other must primarily serve students from urban or suburban areas.

(3)(a) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must distribute a three-year grant to the selected community-based organizations. Money received by a grant recipient in one year of the program may be retained for use in subsequent years.

(b) This grant must be used to expand community-based mentorship programs offered by a grant recipient. A portion of each grant may be used to operate the community-based organization. For the purposes of this section, "expand" means to increase the number of high school students from underrepresented populations in the mentorship program from the number in the program during the school year prior to the awarding of the grant.

(4) By November 15, 2019, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the office of the superintendent of public instruction must provide a report to the appropriate committees of the legislature that describes the application process developed for the grant program and provides information about the organizations selected to receive the first three-year grants.

(5)(a) By November 15, 2021, and by November 15th of every third year thereafter, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the office of the superintendent of public instruction must provide a report to the appropriate committees of the legislature that:

(i) Details how, and the extent to which, the grants were used to expand community-based mentorship programs;

(ii) Provides demographic information on the students served by the grant recipients;

(iii) Summarizes the results of student satisfaction surveys administered by the grant recipients;

(iv) Provides, to the extent the data is available, graduation rates and posthigh school training and education data, such as enrollment in and completion of apprenticeship programs, certificate programs, two-year programs, and four-year programs; and

(v) Includes recommendations for continuing, modifying, or expanding the grant program.

(b) Data on students served by the grant recipient's mentorship programs must be compared, wherever practicable, to data on students who would have been eligible for the programs, but were not served by the grant recipients.

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