AN ACT Relating to equitable educational outcomes for foster care and homeless children and youth from prekindergarten to postsecondary education; amending RCW 74.13.1051; adding a new section to chapter 28A.300 RCW; creating a new section; repealing RCW 28A.300.8001; and providing an expiration date.

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

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. (1) The legislature finds that students in foster care, experiencing homelessness, or both, have the lowest high school graduation and postsecondary completion outcomes compared to other student populations. The legislature also finds that these students change schools at significantly higher rates than their general student population peers, and that these changes can disrupt academic progress. The legislature further finds that these students have disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates, and require special education services at much higher rates than other students.

(2) The legislature acknowledges that, as a result, only forty-six percent of Washington students who experienced foster care during high school, and fifty-five percent of students experiencing homelessness, graduated from high school on time in 2018. By comparison, the statewide four-year graduation rate for the class of 2019 was nearly eighty-one percent. Furthermore, students of color
are disproportionately represented in the foster care system and in homeless student populations, and their academic outcomes are significantly lower than their white peers. Additionally, students who do not achieve positive education outcomes experience high rates of unemployment, poverty, adult homelessness, and incarceration.

(3) The legislature, therefore, intends to provide the opportunity for an equitable education for students in foster care, experiencing homelessness, or both. In accomplishing this goal, the legislature intends to achieve parity in education outcomes for these students, both in comparison to their general student population peers and throughout the education continuum of prekindergarten to postsecondary education.

(4) In 2018 the legislature directed the department of children, youth, and families and other entities to convene a work group focused on students in foster care and students experiencing homelessness. The legislature, through the establishment of a limited duration task force, intends to continue and expand efforts to improve education outcomes for these students.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. A new section is added to chapter 28A.300 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The office of the superintendent of public instruction, in collaboration with the department of children, youth, and families, the office of homeless youth prevention and protection programs of the department of commerce, and the student achievement council, shall convene a task force to address the needs of students in foster care, experiencing homelessness, or both. The task force must include representatives of nongovernmental agencies and representation from the educational opportunity gap oversight and accountability committee. The task force must also include the chairs and ranking members of the committees of the house of representatives and the senate with jurisdiction over education, early learning, and human services issues.

(2) The task force must focus its efforts on students in foster care, experiencing homelessness, or both, and must develop and implement a plan that will accomplish the following by 2027:

(a) Enable the students to achieve parity in education outcomes with their general student population peers; and
(b) Eliminate racial and ethnic disparities for the education outcomes of the students in comparison to their general student population peers.

(3)(a) In 2020, 2021, and 2022, the task force shall review the education outcomes of students in foster care, experiencing homelessness, or both, by examining data, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, on:

(i) Kindergarten readiness, early grade reading and math, eighth and ninth grade students on track to graduate, high school completion, postsecondary enrollment, and postsecondary completion; and

(ii) School attendance, school mobility, special education status, and school discipline.

(b) To enable the review required by this subsection (3), the office of the superintendent of public instruction, the department of children, youth, and families, the student achievement council, and the office of homeless youth prevention and protection programs of the department of commerce shall provide updated education data and other necessary data to the education data center established under RCW 43.41.400.

(c) The education data center must provide an updated report to the task force on these education outcomes by March 31, 2021, and March 31, 2022. If state funds are not made available to complete the reports required by this subsection (3)(c), the task force may pursue supplemental private funding to ensure the completion of the reports.

(4) The task force shall also:

(a) Evaluate the outcomes, needs, and service array for students in foster care, experiencing homelessness, or both, and the specific needs of students of color and those with special education needs;

(b) Engage stakeholders, including students in foster care, experiencing homelessness, or both, foster parents and relative caregivers, birth parents, caseworkers, school districts and educators, early learning providers, postsecondary institutions, and federally recognized tribes, to provide input on the development of recommendations; and

(c)(i) Submit reports to the governor, the appropriate committees of the legislature, and the educational opportunity gap oversight and accountability committee by October 31, 2020, and October 31, 2022, regarding the progress the state has made toward achieving education
parity for students in foster care, experiencing homelessness, or both.

(ii) The reports required by this subsection (4)(c) must:

(A) Describe the progress made toward achieving the following goals for students in foster care, experiencing homelessness, or both:

(I) Parity in kindergarten readiness rates;

(II) Parity in high school graduation rates;

(III) Parity in postsecondary education and state-approved apprenticeship enrollment; and

(IV) Parity in postsecondary education and state-approved apprenticeship completion;

(B) Include updates on agency and nongovernmental agency actions toward achieving the goals specified in this section, and the effectiveness of support services for students in foster care, experiencing homelessness, or both;

(C) Include recommendations to further align and improve policy, programs, agency practice, and supports for students, and provide for shared and sustainable accountability to reach the goal of educational parity, including recommendations to:

(I) Address systems barriers and improve educational stability;

(II) Enforce existing state law requiring that education records, documentation of educational needs, individualized education programs, credits, and other records follow students when they transition between districts or to another education program or facility;

(III) Improve racial equity in education outcomes; and

(IV) Ensure appropriate task force access to consistent and accurate annual education outcomes data;

(D) Identify recommendations that can be implemented using existing resources, rules, and regulations and those that require policy, administrative, and resource allocation changes; and

(E) Identify the progress made toward meaningful engagement of stakeholders in informing recommendations.

(5) Nothing in this section permits disclosure of confidential information protected from disclosure under federal or state law, including but not limited to information protected under chapter 13.50 RCW. Confidential information received by the task force retains its confidentiality and may not be further disseminated except as permitted by federal and state law.
(6) For the purposes of this section, "students in foster care, experiencing homelessness, or both" includes students who are in foster care or experiencing homelessness, and students who have been homeless or in foster care, or both, within five years of when the plan described in this section is applied.

(7) This section expires December 1, 2022.

Sec. 3. RCW 74.13.1051 and 2017 3rd sp.s. c 6 s 405 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) In order to proactively support foster youth to complete high school, enroll and complete postsecondary education, and successfully implement their own plans for their futures, the department, the student achievement council, and the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall enter into, or revise existing, memoranda of understanding that:

(a) Facilitate student referral, data and information exchange, agency roles and responsibilities, and cooperation and collaboration among state agencies and nongovernmental entities; and

(b) Effectuate the transfer of responsibilities from the department to the office of the superintendent of public instruction with respect to the programs in RCW 28A.300.592, and from the department to the student achievement council with respect to the program in RCW 28B.77.250 in a smooth, expedient, and coordinated fashion.

(2) The student achievement council and the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall establish a set of indicators relating to the outcomes provided in RCW 28A.300.590 and 28A.300.592 to provide consistent services for youth, facilitate transitions among contractors, and support outcome-driven contracts. The student achievement council and the superintendent of public instruction shall collaborate with nongovernmental contractors and the department to develop a list of the most critical indicators, establishing a common set of indicators to be used in the outcome-driven contracts in RCW 28A.300.590 and 28A.300.592. (A list of these indicators must be included in the report provided in subsection (3) of this section.

(3) By November 1, 2017, and biannually thereafter, the department, the student achievement council, and the office of the superintendent of public instruction, in consultation with the nongovernmental entities engaged in public-private partnerships shall...
submit a joint report to the governor and the appropriate education and human services committees of the legislature regarding each of these programs, individually, as well as the collective progress the state has made toward the following goals:

(a) To make Washington number one in the nation for foster care graduation rates;
(b) To make Washington number one in the nation for foster care enrollment in postsecondary education; and
(c) To make Washington number one in the nation for foster care postsecondary completion.

(4) The department, the student achievement council, and the office of the superintendent of public instruction, in consultation with the nongovernmental entities engaged in public-private partnerships, shall also submit one report by November 1, 2018, to the governor and the appropriate education and human service committees of the legislature regarding the transfer of responsibilities from the department to the office of the superintendent of public instruction with respect to the programs in RCW 28A.300.592, and from the department to the student achievement council with respect to the program in RCW 28B.77.250 and whether these transfers have resulted in better coordinated services for youth.)

NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. RCW 28A.300.8001 (Plan for cross-system collaboration to promote educational stability and improve educational outcomes for foster children—Reports) and 2012 c 163 s 10 are each repealed.

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