

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2373

As Reported By House Committee On:

Higher Education

Title: An act relating to a pilot project on resident tuition rates and financial aid portability for students residing in certain border counties.

Brief Description: Creating the border county higher education opportunity pilot project.

Sponsors: Representatives Carlson, Kenney, O'Brien, Anderson and Mason.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/22/98, 2/5/98 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Carlson, Chairman; Mason, Ranking Minority Member; Kenney, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Butler; Dunn and O'Brien.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Van Luven.

Staff: Sherie Story (786-7120).

Background: With some exceptions, students who move to Washington or commute from a border state, in order to attend a public college or university, are charged a much higher tuition rate than the one levied on Washington residents.

The definitions for resident and nonresident students are determined by law. Resident students who are dependents must be able to prove that their parents or guardians have been domiciled in the state for at least one year before the students enrolled in college. Independent students must meet the same test themselves. Some exceptions to these requirements are defined as Washington residents by law, such as the spouses and dependents of active duty military personnel stationed in the state and some American Indian students from Idaho, Oregon, and Montana.

In addition, through a variety of tuition waiver programs, some nonresident students are permitted to pay resident tuition rates. These waiver programs are described in law. The programs are permissive, meaning that colleges and universities may choose whether to grant the tuition waivers to eligible students. Tuition reciprocity programs are an example of waiver programs that permit some nonresident students to pay resident tuition rates. The Higher Education Coordinating Board is responsible for entering reciprocity agreements on the state's behalf. The board has entered agreements with Oregon, Idaho, and British Columbia. Under the agreements, a stipulated number of resident students from those states and province are permitted to pay resident tuition rates at stipulated colleges in Washington. In return, a stipulated number of Washington residents are given the same privilege in colleges in Oregon, Idaho and British Columbia.

Under the 1996-97 reciprocity agreement with Oregon, 313 students from Washington pay resident tuition rates at Portland State University and the Oregon Institute of Technology. An additional 274 Washingtonians pay resident rates at eight community colleges in Oregon. Sixty Oregon students pay resident rates at Washington State University, Western Washington University, and The Evergreen State College. Another 577 Oregonians pay resident rates at six community colleges in Washington.

The state of Oregon has recently made tuition policy changes that affect students living in the border counties of Washington. Non-resident students may enroll at Portland State University for eight credits or less and pay resident student rates. Also, Oregon enacted legislation in 1997 to begin providing to its community colleges the same level of state funding for students residing in bordering states as students residing in Oregon.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The border county higher education opportunity pilot project is created. Under the pilot project, Lower Columbia Community College and Clark Community College, located in the Washington border counties of Cowlitz and Clark, may enroll students who reside in the bordering Oregon counties of Columbia and Multnomah at resident tuition rates. The Vancouver branch of Washington State University may enroll students who reside in the bordering Oregon counties of Columbia and Multnomah for eight or less credits at resident tuition rates. In order to qualify for the resident rates at the community colleges, the students must have resided in the bordering Oregon counties for at least 90 days immediately before enrolling.

Through the pilot project, needy resident students who reside in the Washington border counties of Clark and Cowlitz may use their state-funded financial aid awards when they attend eligible career schools or community colleges located in the Oregon counties of Columbia or Multnomah; or to enroll at Portland State University for eight credits or less.

Washington's participation in the pilot project will be administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board. By November 30, 2001, the board will report to the Governor and Legislature on the results of the pilot.

The act expires on June 30, 2002.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The border county pilot project is changed from Spokane County, Washington and Bonner and Kootenai counties, Idaho to Clark and Cowlitz County, Washington and Columbia and Multnomah counties, Oregon.

The three institutions located in Clark and Cowlitz counties are named as participants in the pilot. These are Clark and Lower Columbia Community Colleges and the Vancouver branch of Washington State University (WSU). The community colleges are permitted to enroll students who are residents of Multnomah and Columbia Counties, Oregon without charging a non-resident tuition surcharge. The Vancouver branch of WSU is permitted to enroll Oregon residents of Multnomah and Columbia counties for eight credits or less without charging a non-resident surcharge. The residency requirements for enrollment and financial aid are changed from one year to 90 days.

Implementation is no longer contingent on legislative action by Idaho or Oregon.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill reinforces the concept that higher education is unique to a region. It allows us to provide a regional approach to education. Enrollments will flow within a region rather than being restricted by an artificial border boundary. Some Eastern Washington schools with low or declining enrollments may benefit from the broader pool of students.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Rhonda Coats, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; and George Durrie, Eastern Washington University.