

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5101

As Reported by House Committee On:

Higher Education

Appropriations

Title: An act relating to waiving tuition and fees for public and vocational school teachers and other certificated instructional staff.

Brief Description: Expanding higher education tuition waivers to include certain certificated instructional staff.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Hobbs, McAuliffe, Fairley, Weinstein, Marr, Shin, Oemig, Fraser, Kline, Regala, Rasmussen, Tom, Kohl-Welles and Haugen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 3/21/07, 3/29/07 [DPA];

Appropriations: 3/31/07, 4/2/07 [DPA(APP w/o HE)s].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill (As Amended by House Committee)

- Expands eligibility for state employee college tuition waivers to include public school teachers and certificated instructional staff who are holding or seeking an endorsement in a state-identified shortage area.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Wallace, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Anderson, Ranking Minority Member; Buri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hasegawa, Jarrett, McIntire and Roberts.

Staff: Andrew Colvin (786-7304).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Washington institutions of higher education may waive all or a portion of tuition, services, and activity fees for state employees. "State employees" are defined as permanent classified state employees; state, county, or municipal employees governed by the chapter on collective bargaining; permanent classified and exempt paraprofessional employees at technical colleges; and faculty, counselors, librarians, and exempt professional and administrative employees at institutions of higher education. Tuition waived for such state employees is not presumed to be reimbursed by state funds.

The employees are enrolled on a space available basis and are charged a registration fee of at least \$5. Their enrollment information is not included in official enrollment reports.

Teachers and certificated instructional staff are subject to various continuing education requirements to maintain their teaching credentials.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The tuition waiver currently available to state employees is made available to teachers and certificated instructional staff at public common schools and vocational schools who are taking college courses to fulfill their continuing education requirements. These waivers are provided on a space-available basis and require the recipient of the waiver to pay a registration fee of at least \$5.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:

Teachers are removed from the definition of "state employees" and placed in a separate subsection. The qualification for which teachers are eligible for the waiver is changed to include all teachers enrolling to meet continuing education requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill simply extends the benefit of this tuition waiver to teachers. Graduate credits are expensive, and yet teachers are required to continue their education. This is not a full tuition waiver, but will especially help newer teachers with the costs of their continuing education. It is only available on a space-available basis.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Hewitt, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended by Committee on Appropriations and without amendment by Committee on Higher Education. Signed by 33 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Dunshee, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Buri, Chandler, Cody, Conway, Darneille, Ericks, Fromhold, Grant, Haigh, Hinkle, Hunt, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Kretz, Linville, McDermott, McDonald, McIntire, Morrell, Pettigrew, Priest, Schual-Berke, Seaquist, P. Sullivan and Walsh.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Dunn.

Staff: Debbie Driver (786-7143).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Higher Education:

The Appropriations Committee amendment defines eligible teachers or certificated instructional staff as those holding or seeking an endorsement in a state-identified shortage area. Also, teachers and other certificated instructional staff are removed from the definition of "state employees" and placed in a separate subsection.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) None.

(Opposed) As the bill was amended and passed out of the Higher Education Committee, the definition of eligible teachers was changed to a broad definition, versus a narrow definition that passed out of the Senate. There is concern that the bill sets up a false promise to teachers in that there are a limited number of slots available but a large pool of eligible teachers. In general, tuition waivers are intentionally limited in number by the Legislature and are offered to advance specific policy goals. As the bill passed out of the Senate it included a more defined pool of eligible teachers based on those in state-identified teaching shortage areas.

Persons Testifying: Nasue Nishida, Professional Educator Standards Board; and Jennifer Wallace, The Evergreen State College.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.