H-1557.1

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1238**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2015 Regular Session**

**By** House Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Pollet, Haler, Bergquist, Hargrove, Sells, Fitzgibbon, Fey, and Tarleton)

AN ACT Relating to affordable tuition planning; creating new sections; and providing an expiration date.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature intends that the cost of tuition, where an individual resides in the state, economic status, race or ethnicity, or other status of an individual, should not be a barrier for any resident to obtain a postsecondary certificate or degree from an institution of higher education. The legislature recognizes that when tuition and the total cost of attendance at institutions of higher education significantly exceed ten percent of median family income, it can create barriers to accessing the opportunities of higher education, including increasing student debt burdens for most Washington residents. It is the legislature's intent to examine a range of alternatives to ensure that the opportunity of higher education is accessible and affordable for every resident.

(2) The legislature finds that student loan debt has become a lifetime barrier to improving the quality of life for many Washingtonians. The legislature recognizes that federal student loan programs are scheduled to increase interest rates, while average debt is increasing to twenty-eight thousand dollars for a bachelor's degree. If loan interest rates rise to eight percent, this will threaten students' abilities to choose to pursue public service careers with starting salaries in the thirty thousand dollars to fifty thousand dollars range due to debt payments of over five thousand dollars per year.

(3) The legislature finds that financial aid programs, such as the college bound scholarship program and the state need grant program, do not adequately address affordability for many students whose families earn fifty to seventy percent of the median household income and currently provide no support for those who are truly in the middle of the state's income distribution. The legislature's goal is to use the total cost of attendance as a factor when considering student financial aid policy to accurately represent the true cost of higher education.

(4) The legislature recognizes that in 2002 the state's share of spending relative to tuition at public baccalaureate institutions was seventy-six percent and in 2012 it dropped to thirty-six percent. The legislature finds that this defunding of higher education at the state level has resulted in a reduction in access and opportunity. For example tuition at the University of Washington rose from ten percent of the median family income to over twenty percent in just five years.

(5) The legislature's goal is to make higher education accessible and affordable for all families and it sets a long-term goal for tuition at public institutions of higher education to be no higher than ten percent of the median family income.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) As the student achievement council conducts its planning and outlines strategies as described in RCW 28B.77.020, it shall report to the legislature on the affordability of the higher education system.

(2) Since affordability is central to the state's efforts to reach the educational attainment goals, the student achievement council shall report by December 15, 2016, on tuition rates at the institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016 and how they compare to the state's median household and median family incomes. The report shall, at a minimum:

(a) Show how tuition, as a percentage of median household and median family incomes, has changed over time;

(b) Quantify how much state support would be required to restore tuition at each institution to no more than ten percent of the state's median household and family incomes;

(c) Propose parameters for an appropriate share of the state's median household and median family incomes for the state universities, the regional universities, and the state college; and

(d) Provide strategies to ensure that tuition at any institution is no greater than ten percent of the state's median family income.

(3) This section expires June 30, 2017.

**--- END ---**