S-4295.1

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**SENATE BILL 6626**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2016 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Bailey, Frockt, Baumgartner, Liias, and McAuliffe

AN ACT Relating to creating a work group on accelerated baccalaureate degree programs; 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 finds that university students are increasingly taking on crippling levels of student debt in order to graduate and enter the workforce. This debt hinders their ability to succeed as young adults and seriously threatens their futures and the state's economic potential. Further, the legislature finds that one of the most effective ways of mitigating student debt is to ensure that students graduate on time or earlier. The legislature recognizes that providing students with greater access to accelerated degree programs could greatly contribute to reducing time to degree and ultimate student debt levels. Further, the legislature finds that regional universities and The Evergreen State College are an excellent testing ground for innovations in accelerated programs.

(2) Therefore, the legislature intends to create a work group to study the benefits, challenges, and best practices surrounding accelerated degree programs as a way of promoting their availability and adoption.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The degree in three work group is established.

(a) The work group shall include one representative from each of Washington's regional universities as defined in RCW 28B.10.016 and The Evergreen State College. Each representative shall be selected by the institution he or she represents.

(b) The work group may invite, at its discretion, representatives from other public and private Washington institutions of higher education and agencies to provide advice and expertise.

(2) The purpose of the work group is to:

(a) Develop a set of institutional best practices to promote students' ability to successfully graduate with a baccalaureate degree within three years of entering a regional university or The Evergreen State College;

(b) Identify challenges or obstacles that prevent wider adoption of accelerated degree program options and university students from participating in three-year or other accelerated programs;

(c) Evaluate how public and private institutions of higher education in other states have engaged in accelerated baccalaureate degree programs; and

(d) Develop recommendations that would effectively increase the overall rate of students achieving their baccalaureate degree within three years.

(3) The work group shall report to the legislature and the institutions of higher education on its findings and recommendations by December 31, 2016.

(4) This section expires August 1, 2017.

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