

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5477

As of February 18, 2019

Title: An act relating to requiring institutions of higher education to waive application fees for low-income students.

Brief Description: Requiring institutions of higher education to waive application fees for low-income students.

Sponsors: Senators Dhingra, Hasegawa, Kuderer, Keiser, Hunt, Saldaña, Darneille and Nguyen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/29/19, 1/31/19 [DPS-WM].

Ways & Means: 2/14/19.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Requires higher education institutions to waive college application fees for prospective students who are eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch.
- Directs higher education institutions to post a fee waiver policy on admissions websites.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5477 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Palumbo, Chair; Randall, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Member; Brown, Liias and Wellman.

Staff: Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Daniel Masterson (786-7454)

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.

Background: College application fees for prospective students range from \$50 to \$80 at public colleges and universities in Washington State. All institutions make application fee waivers available to students, with variability in income level required to obtain the waiver, and different processes for applying for the waiver.

Summary of Bill (First Substitute): Higher education institutions must develop a process to waive application fees for students if the student:

- is a Washington resident;
- is in grade 12 or between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one and has not yet graduated from high school;
- applies for acceptance as an undergraduate student pursuing their first bachelor's degree; and
- qualifies for free or reduced-price lunches.

Higher education institutions may not consider receipt of the application fee waiver in the admissions process. The application fee waiver policy must be posted on the admissions website effective Fall 2019.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on First Substitute (Higher Education & Workforce Development): PRO: This idea was brought to me by twelfth graders in my district. The bill makes it easier for individuals to access higher education and simply says that if you are free or reduced-price lunch your application filing fee for college can be waived, It requires institutions to post this information on their website so our children know this is an option. The state of Colorado voluntarily decided to waive application fees for all students for a single day and found applications for students of color and low-income students increased by 12 percent in a single year. We believe marginalized students would benefit immensely from this legislation. Many of our peers are applying to college but have to chose which colleges to apply to because fees cost so much. This would give low-income students more options when applying to college. One student works a minimum wage job to cover application fees while she's applying to college because her parents can't help her. Fee waivers for low-income students give them more choices to apply to schools that are a good fit for them.

Persons Testifying (Higher Education & Workforce Development): PRO: Senator Manka Dhingra, Prime Sponsor; Becca Kenna-Schenk, Western Washington University; Noor Abdulhameed, Lake Washington High School; Dion Babst, Lake Washington High School; Gurneen Gill, Lake Washington High School.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Higher Education & Workforce Development): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on First Substitute (Ways & Means): PRO: For many students the application fee can be the barrier of them trying to go to college and it may discourage them from even applying. A lot of students do not even take this first step because they can not afford to spend up to \$80 dollars on submitting an application to a school they may not even get into. When I was applying to UW, I saw that the price was \$80 dollars and when I showed my mother her eyes nearly popped out and she asked me: Are all of these college applications going to cost this much money? College application fees provide a strong barrier for the future of Washingtonian children. High college fees deter students from applying to institutions of higher learning

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Erick Moreno, Lake Washington High School; Kartal Kaya, Lake Washington High School; Bella Mott, Lake Washington High School; Michael Moran, LWHS/Teach with TVW.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.