

As Passed House:  
February 25, 2021

## HOUSE BILL REPORT

### SHB 1162

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**Title:** An act relating to creating new graduation credit and pathway options.

**Brief Description:** Concerning high school graduation credit and pathway options.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Stonier, Harris, Lekanoff, Hackney, Pollet, Dolan and Callan; by request of State Board of Education).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Education: 1/22/21, 2/4/21 [DPS].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed House: 2/25/21, 72-26.

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Reduces the number of credits required for high school graduation from 24 to 20, and applies the revised credit requirements to the graduating class of 2021 and subsequent classes.
- Establishes an additional graduation pathway option that enables students to meet graduation pathway requirements by completing a performance exhibition meeting specified criteria.
- Modifies credit waiver provisions by limiting a two-credit individual student waiver to students in the graduating class of 2019 and 2020.

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#### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Berg, Bergquist,

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

Callan, Ortiz-Self and Stonier.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Steele.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Ybarra, Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, McEntire and Rude.

**Staff:** Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

### **Background:**

#### Graduation Requirements—Overview.

To qualify for graduation from a public high school in Washington, students must satisfy course and credit requirements established by the State Board of Education (SBE), meet any locally established requirements, complete a high school and beyond plan (HSBP), and meet the requirements of at least one graduation pathway option.

Students requiring special education may qualify for graduation by meeting applicable requirements and earning a Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA). The requirement that qualifying students earn a CIA as a prerequisite to graduation is discontinued after the graduating class of 2021.

#### Credits Required for Graduation and Waivers.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2019, students must complete 24 credits in specified subject areas as determined by the SBE. This 24- credit requirement is known as the career and college-ready graduation requirement. Graduating students in the class of 2021 and subsequent classes must earn 17 core academic credits, four elective credits, and three locally determined personalized pathway credits.

Rules adopted by the SBE to implement the career and college-ready graduation requirements must include authorizations for school districts to waive up to two credits for individual students based on the student's circumstances, provided none of the waived credits are identified as mandatory by the SBE. The waivers must be issued by school districts in accordance with written policies adopted by the applicable school district board of directors.

#### Graduation Pathway Options.

Graduation pathway requirements were established through legislation enacted in 2019 and began application with the graduating class of 2020. The graduation pathway options, which are implemented through rules adopted by the SBE, are as follows:

- meet or exceed the graduation standard established by the SBE on the statewide high school assessments in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics;
- complete and qualify for college credit in dual-credit courses in ELA and mathematics;

- earn high school credit in a high school transition course that meets specific requirements in ELA and mathematics;
- earn high school credit with an appropriate grade or exam score in specified Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or Cambridge International courses in ELA and mathematics;
- meet or exceed the scores established by the SBE for the mathematics portion and the reading, English, or writing portion of the SAT or ACT;
- meet any combination of at least one ELA option and at least one mathematics option established in the previous bullets;
- meet standard in the armed services vocational aptitude battery; and
- complete a sequence of career and technical education courses that are relevant to the student's postsecondary pathway and that meet specific criteria.

School districts are encouraged to make all graduation pathway options available to their students, and to expand their list of options until all are offered, but districts are granted discretion in determining which pathway options they offer.

Other Graduation-Related Duties of the State Board of Education.

The SBE is authorized to establish and enforce minimum graduation requirements. Duties related to this authorization obligate the SBE to reevaluate the graduation requirements for students enrolled in vocationally intensive and rigorous career and technical education (CTE) programs, particularly those programs that lead to a certificate or credential that is state or nationally recognized. The stated purpose of the evaluation is to ensure that students enrolled in the programs have sufficient opportunity to earn a certificate of academic achievement (a discontinued graduation requirement), complete the program and earn the program's certificate or credential, and complete other state and local graduation requirements.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

Graduation Credits.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2021, graduating students must earn at least 20 credits (instead of 24), including the mandatory core subject credits and the personalized pathway requirements defined by the SBE. Although the number of credits required for graduation are reduced, school districts remain obligated to provide students with the opportunity to complete 24 credits.

Waiver provisions that allow school districts to waive up to two credits for individual students based on the student's circumstances are modified and apply only to students in the graduating classes of 2019 and 2020. However, the limitations of school districts to issue waivers to individual students through the provisions do not apply in circumstances where a district is granted flexibility from state requirements under an emergency waiver program established in House Bill 1121, pending legislation from the 2021 Legislative Session.

### Graduation Pathway Options.

An additional graduation pathway option is established. School districts may offer students the opportunity to meet graduation pathway options by completing a performance exhibition that includes: authentic evidence demonstrating industry or profession specific knowledge and skills in two or more subject areas; and opportunities to demonstrate proficiency in other state learning standards.

Prior to offering the graduation pathway to students, the board of directors of the school district must adopt a written policy in conformity with applicable state requirements that describes the school district's processes for:

- approving student requests to use the graduation pathway; and
- evaluating student performance exhibitions.

The SBE, prior to adopting rules to implement the performance exhibition pathway, must consult with states, schools in Washington and in other states, or both, that have successfully implemented exhibition or performance-based options that students may use to demonstrate knowledge and skills. The consultations must address, among other topics determined by the SBE, criteria that is or may be employed when constituting panels to evaluate student performance exhibitions.

School districts are directed to determine if there is disproportionality among specific student subgroups participating in and completing each graduation pathway option offered by the school district. If disproportionality is found, school districts must take appropriate corrective actions to ensure the pathway options are equitable.

### Other Graduation-Related Duties of the State Board of Education.

Provisions mandating the SBE to reevaluate the graduation requirements for students enrolled in vocationally intensive and rigorous CTE programs are modified. The SBE is directed to reevaluate the graduation requirements for students enrolled in vocationally intensive and rigorous CTE programs, particularly those programs that lead to a high school diploma, instead of those that lead to a certificate or a state or nationally recognized credential.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

### **Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Lawmakers and stakeholders have a common goal of making sure that students have a meaningful pathway to graduation day and a successful future. There are concerns about the proposed pathway impacting the CTE pathway, and there is interest in hearing

those concerns, but the proposed and existing pathways do not appear to conflict. Workforce needs are extensive, including in the health care field, and are not being met, so the provisions of this bill will help. This bill is not, as some have claimed, a last-ditch effort to give students who are not prepared for the future an opportunity to graduate. A portfolio pathway will allow students to demonstrate authentic personal evidence that they are prepared for their future.

The SBE was tasked with examining graduation pathways and making recommendations. Many students do not see a connection between available graduation pathways and their longer term goals. This bill responds to this need and will allow students to demonstrate knowledge through a portfolio that is assessed against state learning standards. The bill also allows students to graduate with a minimum of 20 credits instead of the current minimum of 22, but the remaining credits are core credits that are aligned with college admission needs and can be used for CTE and other purposes. Districts must still offer 24 credits. The proposal balances requirements with student interest and desired outcomes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the inequities of institutions, including the education system. The 24-credit requirement doesn't allow students to fail a class and still graduate on time. The limited number of graduation pathways discourages students from entering the trades, and by making credit waivers difficult to attain, students are forced to take courses that do not align with their career paths. This bill will make graduation more flexible and equitable, and will ensure that all students have access to courses that will help them in their careers.

Stakeholders do not want to reduce the rigor required for graduation. Students with high mobility issues are at risk for falling behind and not graduating on time. College is not the pathway for all students. This legislation allows student to have portfolios to demonstrate mastery of learning or an option based on a career pathway that will benefit them immediately.

The proposal will allow students to graduate with 20 credits and meet college admissions requirements, so the rigor of the diploma will be maintained. The portfolio pathway will allow students to demonstrate proficiencies that align with state learning standards and focus on post-graduation goals. The bill increases equitable access to a rigorous and relevant diploma.

Currently, only one pathway focuses on issues other than pure academic achievement. Students are struggling with the currently limited options and the education system creates hardships for these students. Life skills should be included as a graduation pathway as doing so would be consistent with the needs of students.

This bill will create an open-ended pathway that will allow every student to find a pathway that fits them while still maintaining appropriate rigor. The bill will allow students to express and pursue other academic options, including arts and culture. The bill will also

support students by giving them more flexibility and allowing them to make mistakes and explore electives.

The pathway has the potential to open pathways for students to link academic experiences with their post-secondary plans. There are examples of quality portfolio options that meet rigorous state standards and demonstrate mastery in alternate formats. Students are already engaging in internships and other professionally related activities, but often don't receive credit for doing so.

(Opposed) This bill eliminates the 24- credit requirement and could allow students to graduate with as few as 18 credits. The portfolio option proposed does not require students to meet English or math requirements, and the state would have no role in assessing student portfolios or the quality of those portfolios. The Legislature eliminated a previous portfolio assessment because it did not work. The pathway requirements were enacted two years ago and have barely been implemented. The prospect of making constant change to graduation requirements will be confusing to students, parents, and school districts.

Parents and schools haven't had a chance to fully implement existing pathways due to the ongoing pandemic. The mastery-based work group should produce its recommendations before pathway changes are made. There is concern about how the portfolio pathway would communicate readiness and abilities to employers. Stakeholders don't want to see a bifurcated system, where some students receive with 24 credits while others graduate with less preparation.

Lawmakers should examine the CTE pathway that was established in 2019 and subsequently waived for the graduating class of 2020. The proposed portfolio can be accomplished within the existing CTE portfolio. The existing pathway provisions already allow for a mastery-based, competency-based portfolio.

(Other) The bill has potential impacts to higher education. Language should be added that would require school districts to indicate how the portfolio evaluations will be translated into credits, courses, and grades for college admission purposes. This additional language would be consistent with previous requests to the SBE.

The priorities of the Superintendent of Public Instruction point to a reimagined high school experience that better prepares students for multiple pathways to success after high school. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction has significant concerns about the portfolio pathway option. The portfolio will lead to too many students being pointed to that pathway as a last-minute option to ensure graduation. The existing pathway option should be maintained. Additional time and consideration should be devoted to developing a portfolio option.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Stonier, prime sponsor; Marisa Peloquin, Washington State School Directors' Association; Michelle Nims, Washington State PTA;

Randy Spaulding, State Board of Education; Finn O'Donnell, Port Townsend School District; Jaden Bergevin, Association of Washington Student Leaders and Walla Walla High School; Autymn Wilde; Daija Tramble, Highline Big Picture School; and Vickei Hrdina, Educational Service District 112 Career Connect Southwest.

(Opposed) Neil Strege, Washington Roundtable; Virginia Barry, Stand for Children; and Dave Mastin, Association of Washington Business.

(Other) Ruben Flores, Council of Presidents; and Katherine Mahoney, Office of the Superintendent Of Public Instruction.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** Ashley Lin, Mastery-Based Learning Workgroup; Jeff Petty, Highline Big Picture School; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Erin Lark, iTech Prep - Vancouver Public Schools; A'Jahlei Rideb, University Place School District; Tim Knue, Washington Association for Career and Technical Education; Shirline Wilson, Education Reform Now Advocacy; and Cecily Kiester, Insight School of Washington Quillayute Valley School District.