

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1976

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Higher Education*

Title: An act relating to educational opportunities for minority criminal justice professionals.

Brief Description: Creating the minority criminal justice education loan program.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Ebersole, Wang, Jacobsen, Ludwig, Franklin, Holland, Leonard and Anderson.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Higher Education, March 4, 1991, DPS.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
HIGHER EDUCATION**

Majority Report: *That Substitute House Bill No. 1976 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.*
Signed by 13 members: Representatives Jacobsen, Chair; Ogden, Vice Chair; Wood, Ranking Minority Member; May, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Dellwo; Fraser; Ludwig; Miller; Prince; Sheldon; Spanel; and Van Luven.

Staff: Marilee Scarbrough (786-7196).

Background: In 1987, legislation was enacted requiring the establishment of a State Minority and Justice Task Force. The legislation required: (1) a study of the status of minorities as litigants, lawyers, judges, and court employees; (2) recommendations for implementing reform; and (3) attitude awareness training for judges and legal professionals.

Washington State Supreme Court Justice Charles Z. Smith served as chairperson of the Minority and Justice Task Force. There were 20 appointed members and 16 technical support members of the task force, including private citizens, academicians, lawyers, judges, and other professionals involved in the criminal justice system. The task force members were divided into six subcommittees.

Beginning in 1988, the task force held public forums around the state to identify issues of concern regarding the court

system and the legal profession. The task force also conducted qualitative and quantitative research in an effort to accumulate information and data from a variety of sources. Additionally, the task force conducted research activities, including: (1) a review of prosecutors' and public defenders' guidelines and their perceptions of racial and ethnic bias; (2) a comparable study of community corrections officers; and (3) two separate questionnaires developed to collect data on selected landlord-tenant problems, and settlement amounts award minorities in asbestos cases.

After 30 months, the task force published its research findings, conclusions, and recommendation to the state Legislature. Some of the conclusions were: (1) minorities believe that bias pervades the entire legal system in general and, hence, they do not trust the court system to resolve their disputes or administer justice even-handedly; and (2) based on responses to questionnaires sent to prosecutors and public defenders, it was concluded that systemic institutionalized bias may negatively impact those who lack financial resources, many of whom are minorities.

Summary of Substitute Bill: A Minority Criminal Justice Education Loan Program is created. The program will be administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board. The board's program powers and duties are described. These include selecting students with the help of a screening committee, adopting rules and guidelines, and publicizing the program. The board will also solicit and accept donations, deposit donations into the endowment fund, and receive moneys from the state treasurer for funding the scholarships.

The board will design the program and establish student selection criteria with the help of an advisory committee. The selection criteria will assess the student's social and cultural ties to an identified ethnic minority group and the recipient's ability to act as a role model for ethnic minority children.

The advisory and the screening committees will be comprised of criminal justice professionals, leaders in bar associations, members of criminal justice groups, and representatives from law enforcement.

Student eligibility criteria is outlined. Recipients must be resident students enrolled in a course of instruction leading to a criminal justice profession. A recipient must also be a minority and financially needy.

The board may award scholarships from funds received from any source, including appropriated funds, private donations, or from earnings on the minority criminal justice education endowment fund. An undergraduate student may receive a maximum of \$4,000 per year. A graduate student may receive a maximum of \$8,000 per year. The maximum amount a student may receive under the program is \$24,000.

Student recipients must repay the scholarship, unless they are employed on a full-time basis in a criminal justice profession for a period of not less than two years for each year of scholarship assistance received. Repayment provisions, including deferral, are consistent with the federal guaranteed student loan program. The total repayment period will not exceed five years.

Two million dollars is appropriated for the biennium for the purpose of the minority criminal justice education endowment fund. One hundred thousand dollars is appropriated from the general fund to the board for loans authorized during the first year after enactment. Forty-one thousand, five hundred and forty-eight dollars is appropriated for the biennium to the board to administer the act.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill provides that the Higher Education Coordinating Board will administer the program with the assistance of an advisory and screening committee. Students must be enrolled full-time in a course of study leading to a career in the criminal justice profession.

The loan amounts in the substitute bill are clearly defined. An undergraduate student may receive a maximum of \$4,000 per year. A graduate student may receive a maximum of \$8,000 per year. The maximum amount any student may receive under the program is \$24,000. Repayment provisions are clarified so that they are consistent with the federal guaranteed student loan program and existing conditional scholarship programs.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Appropriation: Yes.

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

Testimony For: Additional minorities are needed in the criminal justice profession. Recruitment of qualified minorities into the criminal justice profession has been difficult. Minorities are under-represented in the criminal justice profession compared to their percentage in the

population. A loan forgiveness program will provide a major incentive for minority professional to enter criminal justice occupations.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Andrew Rodriguez, Commission on Hispanic Affairs; John Ladenburg, Pierce County Prosecuting Attorney; Paola Maranan, Commission on African American Affairs; Anita Neal, Washington State Hispanic Bar Association; and Dean Lum, Asian Bar Association of Washington.