

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1190

As Reported by House Committee On:

Education

Title: An act relating to classified staff in alternative certification programs.

Brief Description: Changing provisions for classified staff in alternative certification programs.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Tom, Grant, Talcott, Benson, Ahern, Shabro, Lovick, Dunshee, Anderson, Delvin, McCoy, Cody, Miloscia, Eickmeyer, Mielke, Linville, Pearson, Kessler, Cairnes and Mastin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/29/03, 2/13/03 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires school districts to permit classified staff to retain employee status while participating in the alternative routes to teacher certification program.
- Limits the amount of time that an employee will retain that status to two years for para-educators in Route One and one year for classified staff in Route Two.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; McDermott, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Tom, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Cox, Haigh, Hunter, McMahan, Rockefeller and Santos.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

The 2001 Legislature, at the recommendation of the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), created three alternative routes to prepare new teachers for subjects and geographic locations in which there are a shortage of qualified educators.

The first route (Route One) was limited to para-educators who hold an Associate of Arts Degree. In order to qualify for the program, these para-educators had to seek an endorsement to teach in special education, bilingual education or English as a second language. Participants in this route could take two years to complete the program.

The second route (Route Two) was a one-year certification program limited to public school classified staff. These students had to hold a baccalaureate degree and seek certification in an identified subject or geographic shortage area.

The third route (Route Three) was a one-year program limited to persons outside the public school system. These participants were required to have five years of work experience, a baccalaureate degree and a demonstrated ability to work with children or students.

Participants in all three routes were also required to meet background record checks and to pass the subject matter tests developed by the PESB. The one-year certification programs were developed as partnerships between one or more school districts and a higher education partner. The majority of the education was to take place in a K-12 classroom under the direction of a mentor teacher, with higher education helping to fill in the gaps a student needed.

The participants were eligible to receive 80 percent of a beginning teacher's salary (about \$22,500). The remaining funds were to go to the district and the mentor teacher.

School districts do not have a uniform policy for determining the employee status of para-educators and classified staff in the program. In some, but not all districts, para-educators and classified staff lose their health and pension benefits when they enter the program.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Para-educators and classified staff in Route One and Route Two of the alternative certification program will retain their employee status while enrolled in the program. Para-educators in Route One may retain that status for a maximum of two years. Classified staff in Route Two may retain it for a maximum of one year.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Technical correction to Route Two employees, clarifying that the status will last one year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: This bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Classified staff who participated in the alternative routes to certification program usually stayed within the same school districts and school buildings in which they worked the year before. Many, especially those in the first year of Route One, continued to perform some or all of the same duties that they had previously performed. In most instances, districts continued the employment status of the participants, which allowed them to keep their health and retirement benefits. However, some districts, primarily in South West Washington, reclassified the participants as independent contractors, making them ineligible for employee benefits. The loss of these benefits, which occurred after the employees had been led to believe that benefits would continue, posed significant hardships for some participants who were providing health insurance for their entire families. Teachers who are training to become principals don't lose their employee status, so classified staff who are training to become teachers shouldn't lose their's either.

(With concerns) If the budget recommendations of the PESB are adopted, the stipend available in this program will end, a programmatic change that might give districts an incentive to retain these employees, which could making this legislation unnecessary.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Representative Quall, prime sponsor; and Doug Nelson, Public School Employees of Washington.

(With concerns) Jennifer Wallace, Professional Educator Standards Board.