

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2583

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education & Workforce Education
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to community and technical college part-time academic employee health care benefits.

Brief Description: Regarding community and technical college part-time academic employee health benefits.

Sponsors: Representatives Kenney, Cox, Conway, Hasegawa, Roberts, Appleton, Upthegrove, Morrell, Linville, Hunt, Dickerson and Ormsby.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education & Workforce Education: 1/20/06, 2/2/06 [DPS];
Appropriations: 2/4/06 [DP2S(w/o sub HEWE)].

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Maintains health care benefits for part-time academic employees at community and technical colleges, provided that the employees establish and maintain a workload pattern.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Kenney, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Cox, Ranking Minority Member; Rodne, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buri, Dunn, Fromhold, Hasegawa, Jarrett, Ormsby, Priest, Roberts and Sommers.

Staff: Nina Oman (786-7152).

Background:

Part-time academic employees at community and technical colleges who work half-time or more are currently eligible for health benefits beginning the second quarter they are employed half-time or more. They are also currently eligible for health benefits over the summer quarter even if they work under half-time, as long as they have worked half-time or more in three of the four quarters preceding summer.

However, if an employee works under half-time for one quarter, that employee loses benefit coverage for that quarter as well as for the following summer quarter.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Sections are added to the Health Care Authority statutes that describe health care benefit coverage for part-time academic employees at community and technical colleges.

Part-time academic employees at community and technical colleges who have established eligibility for health care benefits are eligible for continuation of their health care benefits over the summer if they have worked an average of half-time or more in the preceding academic year through employment at one or more community or technical college districts.

Uninterrupted health care benefits for part-time academic employees at community and technical colleges are maintained as long as the employee works at least three of the four quarters of the academic year with an average academic workload of half-time or more.

Health care benefit coverage ceases at the end of the academic year if the employee has not maintained at least a half-time average academic workload over three of the four quarters of the academic year.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The specifications for establishing a workload pattern over a two-year period are eliminated. Provisions of the original bill are deleted, and the following provisions are added:

- Part-time academic employees at community and technical colleges who have established eligibility for health care benefits receive uninterrupted benefits over the summer if they have worked an average of at least half-time in the preceding academic year.
- Health care benefits for part-time academic employees at community and technical colleges continue uninterrupted, once established, as long as the employee works at least three of the four quarters at least half-time. Benefits cease at the end of the academic year if this criteria is not met.

Sections are added to the Health Care Authority statutes describing health care benefit coverage for part-time academic employees at community and technical colleges. An emergency clause is added.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available on substitute bill.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: This bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: (In support) Part-time employees are important to the flexibility of the two-year colleges. Some part-time faculty whose coverage is not continued must face the difficult choice of spending their income on self-pay insurance or going to public health clinics. Faculty would like to see the same physician consistently. The colleges currently have a system for keeping track of employees working at multiple colleges. Adding an emergency clause would prevent another group of faculty from losing their health benefits this summer.

(With concerns) Concerns include potential costs to other agencies, adequate funding for implementation, and clarification that the Health Care Authority is the state agency responsible for adopting rules.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) John Boesenberg, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Federation of Teachers; and Louis Watanabe, Bellevue Community College and Part-time Faculty Association;

(With concerns) Dennis Martin, Washington State Health Care Authority.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Education. Signed by 30 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McDonald, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Bailey, Buri, Chandler, Clements, Cody, Conway, Darneille, Dunshee, Grant, Haigh, Hinkle, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Linville, McDermott, Miloscia, Pearson, Priest, Schual-Berke, P. Sullivan, Talcott and Walsh.

Staff: Brian Enslow (786-7143).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Higher Education & Workforce Education:

Part-time academic employees must maintain an average half-time workload over two academic years, rather than a single academic year, to become eligible or reestablish eligibility for continuous health care coverage.

Employers are responsible for notifying employees of their potential right to benefits. Employees who are affected by the provisions of this bill are responsible for notifying their employer of their potential eligibility for maintenance of benefits.

The second substitute requires the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (State Board) to report back to the Legislature by November 15, 2009 on the feasibility of eliminating this requirement.

The emergency clause is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available on the substitute bill. New fiscal note requested on the second substitute bill.

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

Testimony For: This bill is reflective of a collaborative effort. This does not create a new eligibility; all this does is maintain their eligibility so that they continue their benefits if they fall below 50 percent for one quarter, but maintain a yearly average of over 50 percent. The State Board already tracks eligibility. This bill should not create an additional workload.

This is an important benefit to part-time faculty, and one that arguably has already been earned. This bill ensures that they receive this benefit. The Washington Education Association hopes that the State Board can find cost-effective ways to administer this program.

The State Board supports the bill. However, part-time faculty eligibility rules for health care are already fairly complex. Our current payroll system is not designed to track the existing rules; we have to track those manually. Allowing for averaging would require tracking thousands of additional employees.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) John Boesenberg, State Board of Community and Technical Colleges; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, American Federation of Teachers-Washington; and Gary King, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.