

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 3127

As Reported by House Committee On:

Education
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to education.

Brief Description: Regarding the center for the improvement of student learning.

Sponsors: Representatives Santos, Hasegawa, McCoy, P. Sullivan, McDermott, Upthegrove, Pettigrew and Morrell.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/26/06, 2/2/06 [DP];

Appropriations: 2/4/06 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates an Education Ombudsman's office within the Center for Improvement of Student Learning (CISL) to provide information and dispute investigation and resolution services to parents, districts, and others.
- Creates an Education Advisory Committee to advise and make recommendations to the Superintendent of Public Instruction regarding the effectiveness of the CISL and the Education Ombudsman's office, methods to increase community involvement, and ways to improve educational opportunities for all students.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; P. Sullivan, Vice Chair; Haigh, Hunter, McDermott, Santos and Wallace.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Priest, Shabro and Tom.

Staff: Sarah Ream (786-7303).

Background:

Establishment of the Center for Improvement of Student Learning (CISL)

In 1993, as part of education reform, the Legislature created the CISL under the auspices of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The Legislature directed the CISL to serve as an education information clearinghouse. The Legislature also created a non-appropriated account that was to be used for any gifts, grants, or endowments for the CISL. In 1996, the Legislature expanded the CISL's role to include providing best practices research on programs and practices to improving reading instruction.

CISL's Funding History

When the CISL was created in 1993, the Legislature appropriated \$400,000 from the State General Fund for the 1993-95 biennium to support its operations. An additional \$500,000 was appropriated in the 1994 supplemental budget. For each of the 1995-97, 1997-99, and 1999-01 biennia, the CISL received a dedicated appropriation of \$1.26 million. Each budget proviso stated that the funds were provided for technical assistance related to education reform through the OSPI, in consultation with the CISL.

In the 2001-03 biennial budget, the Legislature ceased providing dedicated funding for the CISL.

Summary of Bill:

The Center for Improvement of Student Learning (CISL)

Authority for the CISL is moved from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to the Governor's office.

The CISL's primary purpose is to provide assistance and advice to parents, school board members, educators, and the public regarding strategies for assisting student learning. The CISL is directed to: (1) be an information clearinghouse, including maintaining a website; (2) provide best practices research and advice; (3) develop parental involvement materials and identify obstacles and solutions regarding increasing parental and community involvement in education; (4) help inform educators regarding school boards' powers; and (5) address methods to improve success rates of students in certain ethnic and racial groups. The CISL may contract with others to help provide these services.

The CISL Account is created in the custody of the State Treasurer for the benefit of the CISL. Private donations, gifts, and endowments directed to the CISL will be deposited into this account.

Creation of the Education Ombudsman's Office

An Education Ombudsman's office is created within the CISL. The Education Ombudsman is appointed by the Governor and reports to the Governor and the Director of the CISL. The duties of the ombudsman include providing information to students, parents, school districts and others regarding their rights and responsibilities relative to the public education system. The ombudsman is empowered to investigate complaints and to assist in the resolution of

complaints lodged by parents and students. The ombudsman may contract with non-profit organizations and government agencies (except for schools, school districts, or current employees of either) to provide ombudsman services around the state.

The ombudsman and regional education ombudsmen will not be liable for acts associated with the good faith performance of the ombudsman's duties. The ombudsman must keep all matters under investigation confidential, except as necessary to perform the ombudsman's duties. Records regarding ombudsman investigations are not subject to public disclosure under the Public Records Act. If the ombudsman believes any public official, employee or other person has committed a crime, the ombudsman must report this fact to the appropriate authorities.

Creation of the Education Advisory Committee

An Education Advisory Committee is created within the Governor's office. Of the committee members, five must be parents (one of these must have a student enrolled in special education and one must be a member of the Washington Parent Teacher Association), one member must be chosen from each of the four ethnic commissions, and one member must be a teacher or administrator. Committee members should represent the geographic and ethnic diversity of the state.

The advisory committee will make recommendations to the Governor regarding, among other things, the effectiveness of the CISL and the Education Ombudsman's office, methods to increase community involvement, and ways to improve educational opportunities for all students.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed except, section 12 relating to the exemption from public inspection or copying of investigative, law enforcement and crime victim information, which takes effect July 1, 2006.

Testimony For: This bill reintroduces a key piece of education reform the Center for Improvement of Student Learning (CISL). Reviving the CISL is in line with Washington Learns. Placing the CISL within the Governor's office provides it with more credibility. The advisory committee will help guide the process and provide communication between policy makers, parents and educators.

Parent involvement is essential to student success. However, not all parents have the same opportunities to be involved with their children's school. The ombudsman's office will provide parents with information and help them more quickly learn how to navigate the educational system. It will also help with statewide networking of parents.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Santos, prime sponsor; Linda Hanson, Parent Washington State Parent Teacher Association; Bev Young Green and Brian Conlin, Washington State Parent Teacher Association; Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition; and Suzi Wright, Tulalip Tribes.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Clements, Cody, Conway, Darneille, Dunshee, Grant, Haigh, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Linville, McDermott, Miloscia, Schual-Berke, P. Sullivan and Walsh.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McDonald, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Bailey, Buri, Chandler, Hinkle, Pearson, Priest and Talcott.

Staff: Charlie Gavigan (786-7340).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Education:

The Appropriations Committee changes keeps the Center for Improvement of Student Learning and the Education Ombudsman in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction rather than moving them to the Governor's Office. In addition, the Education Ombudsman must partner with one or more nonprofit organizations that represent parents.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except section 11 relating to the exemption from public inspection a copying of investigative, law enforcement and crime victim information, which takes effect July 1, 2006.

Testimony For: Families need a place to go for help navigating through the education system. The Center and Education Ombudsman can provide this help. The Center can help parents address anxiety about education reform and can facilitate greater involvement of parents in their children's education.

Testimony Against: While this issue is important, it should be dealt with next year in conjunction with recommendations from Washington Learns and the State Board of Education.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Mary Kentiela, State PTA; and Donna Overseer, Washington State Special Education Coalition and parent.

(Opposed) Terry Bergeson, Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.