

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5402

As Amended by House, April 4, 2007

Title: An act relating to private vocational school programs.

Brief Description: Establishing additional requirements for private vocational schools.

Sponsors: Senators Kilmer, Delvin, Shin and Rockefeller; by request of Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/5/07 [DP-WM].

Passed Senate: 3/02/07, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Shin, Chair; Kilmer, Vice Chair; Delvin, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Schoesler and Sheldon.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: The private Vocational School Act authorizes the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB) to license private vocational schools operating within the state. The WTECB adopts rules establishing minimum standards requiring: disclosure of financial resources, refund policies, information aiding in enrollment decisions, disclosure of enrollment prerequisites and requirements, assessments of potential students basic skills, and discussions with potential students about the enrollment contracts.

There is a tuition recovery trust fund established for the purpose of settlement of claims related to school closures and losses of tuition and fees paid by students. The fund is maintained through fees collected from private vocational school operators.

Summary of Bill: It is clarified that private vocational schools must meet the minimum requirements to obtain and maintain an operating license. Private vocational schools must demonstrate their financial viability and responsibility to the WTECB. If any of the requirements are not met, the WTECB may deny the private vocational school's license application.

Before enrolling students for whom English is a second language, the schools must administer an English as a second language examination, unless the student graduated from a United States high school or passes a General Educational Development test or other approved

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

assessment in English. The school must comply with the requirements related to the qualifications of administrators and instructors.

If the WTECB determines that a private vocational school is at risk for closure or termination, the school may be required to take corrective action. In making the determination, the WTECB considers whether there is a pattern or history of substantiated student complaints or whether there is a present and historical pattern of failing to meet minimum requirements. If a school closes without providing adequate student notice, the WTECB provides transition assistance to the students including information regarding: transfer options, financial aid discharge procedures, labor market and job placement assistance, and other available support services.

Appropriation: \$106,000.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The recent cases of private vocational school closings illustrate the need for this bill. Regulation of private vocational schools is strengthened while providing a graduate state response. The students will receive greater protections. Responsible private vocational school operators support these changes.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kilmer, prime sponsor; Don Bennett, WTECB; Gena Wikstrom, NW Career Colleges Association.

House Amendment(s): The appropriation is eliminated.