

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5734

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education & Workforce Development, February 13, 2009

Title: An act relating to tuition fees for students other than resident undergraduates.

Brief Description: Making certain current higher education tuition-setting practices permanent.

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/10/09, 2/13/09 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5734 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Kilmer, Chair; Jarrett, Vice Chair; Becker, Ranking Minority Member; Jacobsen, Kastama, McAuliffe, Pflug, Shin and Stevens.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: Beginning with the 2003-04 academic year, the governing boards of the public colleges and universities have authority to set full-time tuition fees for all students other than resident undergraduates. The Legislature has the authority to set full-time tuition fees for resident undergraduates at public colleges and universities. The governing boards' limited fee-setting authority will expire at the end of the 2008-09 academic year. Beginning in the 2009-10 academic year, tuition fees for full-time students at the state's colleges and universities will be the same as tuition charged in the 2008-09 academic year unless different rates are adopted by the Legislature.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): The governing boards' limited fee-setting authority is extended through the 2014-15 academic year. Beginning in the 2015-16 academic year, tuition fees for full-time students at the state's colleges and universities will

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be the same as tuition charged in the 2014-15 academic year unless different rates are adopted by the Legislature.

Appropriation: None.

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: Higher education institutions need to have predictability in finances, and allowing them to set their own tuition fees provides predictability. It also allows them to provide better quality in programs. Tuition setting authority provides the institutions with more flexibility in participating in partnerships with business and in responding to the needs of business. Higher education institutions have been responsible and reasonable in setting tuition rates over the past six years.

CON: There is less accountability when colleges and universities set tuition than when the Legislature sets tuition. The Legislature provides public hearings and public records for decisions. A public education should be accessible to all. Graduate students need reasonable and predictable tuition increases. There needs to be a cap on tuition increases. Undergraduates should be encouraged to go to graduate school, and a good way to do this is to keep costs under control.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Chris Thompson, HECB; Randy Hodgins, UW; Mike Reilly, Council of Presidents; Brian Jeffries, Washington Roundtable.

CON: Michael Ludd, Joseph Carter, TCC United Against Budget Cuts; David Iseminger, UW graduate and professional student senate.