

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1977

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### As Reported by House Committee On: Higher Education

**Title:** An act relating to a tuition and fees exemption for children and surviving spouses of certain highway workers.

**Brief Description:** Creating a tuition and fees exemption for children and surviving spouses of certain highway workers.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Moscoso, Orcutt, Clibborn, Bergquist, Zeiger, Pollet and Tarleton.

#### **Brief History:**

##### **Committee Activity:**

Higher Education: 2/17/15, 2/18/15 [DP].

#### **Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires the public baccalaureate institutions to waive tuition and fees for children and surviving spouses of certain highway workers.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Zeiger, Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Gregory, Reykdal, Sells and Tarleton.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Hargrove and Van Werven.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Holy and Stambaugh.

**Staff:** Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

#### **Background:**

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*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.*

State law requires and also authorizes public institutions of higher education to grant various tuition and fee waivers. Some waivers are state-supported, and institutions receive state funding to make up revenue from waived tuition and fees. Other waivers are discretionary, and institutions do not receive state funding. The institutions are limited in their tuition and fee waiver authority in that the total amount of tuition and fee revenue waived, exempted, or reduced may not exceed a percentage of their estimated gross operating fee revenue. The institutions' percentage caps are as follows:

- University of Washington is 21 percent;
- Washington State University is 20 percent;
- Eastern Washington University is 11 percent;
- Central Washington University is 10 percent;
- Western Washington University is 10 percent;
- The Evergreen State College is 10 percent; and
- community colleges as a whole are 35 percent.

Under certain conditions, the following individuals must be given tuition and fee waivers to attend a postsecondary institution: wrongly convicted persons and their children; Washington Scholar students; children and spouses of eligible veteran or National Guard members; and children and spouses of law enforcement officers, firefighters, or state patrol officers who lost their lives or became totally disabled in the line of duty. Totally disabled means a person who has become totally or permanently disabled for life by bodily injury or disease, and is thereby prevented from performing any occupation or gainful pursuit.

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### **Summary of Bill:**

The state universities, the regional universities, and The Evergreen State College must waive tuition and fees for the children and surviving spouses of highway workers who died or became totally disabled in the line of duty while employed by a transportation agency. A transportation agency means any agency, department, or division of a municipal corporation, political subdivision, or other unit of local government in Washington whose primary function is the construction and maintenance of the state's highways and roads. A transportation agency is distinguished from a transit agency, as one of a transportation agency's main functions is highway maintenance, such as the State Department of Transportation. A transportation agency does not include government contractors.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) This is a sincere, simple bill that is similar to tuition and fee waivers already in statute for children and surviving spouses of police officers and firefighters. This is an opportunity to help families who lose a breadwinner to have the chance to attend an institution of higher education. Highway workers risk their lives every day working around traffic. A study found that highway workers are two to four times more likely to be injured on the job. A work-zone injury occurs every 13 minutes. Many of these workers work alongside first responders and help with accidents. There are highway workers who assist people fixing a flat tire. This bill would only cover local and state government workers who work on the highway.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Moscoso, prime sponsor; Greg Selstead, Washington State Department of Transportation; Bill Ford, Washington State Department of Transportation Memorial Foundation; Vince Oliveri, Professional and Technical Employees; and Matt Zuvich, Washington Federation of State Employees.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.