

SENATE BILL REPORT

E2SHB 1983

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 25, 2016

Title: An act relating to a pilot project on financial assistance for teachers taking basic skills and content tests for teacher certification programs.

Brief Description: Creating the TEACH pilot project of financial assistance for teachers taking basic skills and content tests for teacher certification programs.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Pollet, Zeiger, S. Hunt, Haler and Bergquist).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/15/16, 58-39.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/23/16, 2/25/16 [DP-WM, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

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

Signed by Senators Litzow, Chair; McAuliffe, Ranking Member; Billig, Fain, Hill, Mullet, Rivers and Rolfes.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Dammeier, Vice Chair.

Staff: Alia Kennedy (786-7405)

Background: Basic Skills and Content Tests for Teacher Certification. To obtain a teaching certificate in Washington, candidates must pass a basic skills test that includes reading, writing, and mathematics. Most teacher preparation programs require passage of the basic skills test prior to admittance. In addition to the basic skills test, a candidate must also pass a content test that identifies the subject matter and grade levels that they are authorized to teach. Each new teaching certificate must include at least one subject matter, also known as an endorsement.

Passage of both tests is required prior to applying for a certification with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Basic skills test fees range from \$155 to \$225, and

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content knowledge test fees range from \$95 to \$155. Test takers must also pay a \$35 registration fee.

Washington Student Achievement Council Conditional Scholarship Programs. The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) was created by the Legislature in 2012 to provide strategic planning, oversight, advocacy, and programs to support increased student success and higher levels of educational attainment in Washington. WSAC administers the majority of the state's student financial aid programs and is the fiscal agent for conditional scholarship programs that forgive all or part of a loan in exchange for service in an endorsement area as a certificated teacher at a K-12 public school. While requirements and limitations vary by program, scholarship recipients may use awarded funds for the costs of tuition, fees, and educational expenses, including books, supplies, and transportation.

Professional Educator Standards Board. The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), the 12-member board charged with establishing policies and requirements for the preparation and certification of educators, measures teacher shortages by looking at how quickly teachers find positions in Washington's public schools. The PESB also designates official personnel shortage areas based on periodic analysis of educator supply and demand in the state.

According to the PESB, teachers with multiple endorsements are more likely to be hired than teachers with a single endorsement. PESB also reports that teachers with an endorsement in special education, science, or math are generally hired more quickly than teachers with social studies, history, or English language arts endorsements.

Summary of Bill: The Teacher Endorsement and Certification Help (TEACH) pilot project is created to develop an expandable program that provides grants to teachers taking basic skills and content tests for teacher certification programs. The creation of the program is dependent upon funds being specifically appropriated by the Legislature for its establishment. Authorization for the project expires June 30, 2021.

WSAC, after consultation with PESB, is charged with developing and adopting rules by August 1, 2016 to administer the TEACH pilot project. The rules must satisfy specified requirements including establishing grant application and financial need verification processes.

To qualify for financial assistance under the TEACH pilot project, an applicant must:

- be enrolled in, have applied to, or have completed a teacher preparation program approved by PESB;
- show a financial need, as demonstrated by the student's eligibility to receive the state need grant; and
- register for an endorsement competency test in an endorsement shortage area.

Grant funds awarded under the TEACH pilot project must be awarded beginning September 1, 2016 to cover the costs of basic skills and content tests required for teacher certification. In awarding funds, WASC must prioritize grant awards first to applicants registered for competency tests in endorsement shortage areas, and second to applicants with the greatest financial need. WASC is required to scale the number of TEACH pilot project grant awards to the amount of appropriated funds.

WSAC, in collaboration with PESB, must submit a preliminary report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 31, 2018 that details the effectiveness and costs of the TEACH pilot project. The preliminary report must comply with specific requirements including comparing the numbers and demographic information of students taking and passing tests in the endorsement shortage areas before and after implementation of the TEACH pilot project. A final report that details the effectiveness and costs of the TEACH pilot project and includes a recommendation as to whether the pilot project should be modified, continued, or expanded is due to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 31, 2020.

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: Candidates in teacher preparation programs have expressed repeated financial hits in the form of testing fees. This is on top of the high cost of college. Providing financial support to cover testing fees would be one more mechanism to attracting people into the teaching profession.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Pollet; prime sponsor; Bob Cooper, Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

CON: Grazyna Prouty, WA Certified teacher (continuing contract in Tahoma 2005/2006 - 2010-2011), ESL (ELL), Bilingual).

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.