

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2476

As of February 24, 2016

Title: An act relating to waivers from the one hundred eighty-day school year requirement.

Brief Description: Concerning waivers from the one hundred eighty-day school year requirement.

Sponsors: Representatives Johnson, Santos, Magendanz, Chandler, S. Hunt, DeBolt, Blake, McCabe, Reykdal, Tharinger, Dent, Hawkins, Rossetti, Muri, Haler and Hargrove.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/17/16, 98-0.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/23/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: Current law requires school districts to offer a minimum 180-day school year and a specified number of instructional hours by grade level to receive full basic education funding. The State Board of Education (SBE) is charged with assuring compliance with these basic education provisions but is also authorized to grant waivers under certain circumstances.

In 2009, the Legislature created a pilot program authorizing SBE to grant waivers from the minimum 180-day school year requirement to enable small school districts to operate on a flexible school calendar. The school districts must still meet the minimum number of instructional hours required by law. School districts must provide specified information to obtain a waiver, including information the SBE may request, to assure that the proposed flexible calendar will not adversely affect student learning.

The waivers are limited to two waivers for school districts with fewer than 150 students and three waivers for school districts with 151–500 students. After each school year SBE must determine whether the flexible calendar is adversely affecting student learning. If SBE determines that student learning is adversely affected then the school district must discontinue the flexible calendar.

Originally, the pilot program expired August 31, 2014. In the 2014 legislative session the expiration date was extended to August 31, 2017.

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.

The Bickleton and Paterson school districts have implemented a four-day school week using these waivers since January 2010.

Summary of Bill: The expiration on the SBE's authorization to grant waivers to school districts to operate on a flexible school calendar is removed. Non-substantive grammatical changes are made.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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: In 2009, some of our smaller, rural districts approached the Legislature to get a more flexible school calendar because their school district spans such a large area and are sparsely populated it sometimes takes all-day to travel outside their school district in order to participate in sports and other extracurricular activities. Only two school districts have accessed these flexible school calendar waivers: Bickleton and Paterson. These districts have gone to a four-day school week and added an extra one and one-half hours to each of those four days in order to maintain the number of instructional hours. This way the districts can use Fridays to travel to participate in sports. Their students are very academically successful and the districts would like to continue having the ability to operate in this manner. Bickleton has a 100 percent high school graduation rate.

OTHER: Why are the waivers being provided to serve the students who are participating in sports? What are the other students doing when some students are traveling to participate in sports? Maybe it would be better if we had non-compulsory education instead of compulsory education. There is research that shows that there is another model for education that might be considered, which would make education non-compulsory. Under that model, school districts would not have to go through the waiver process.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Norm Johnson, Prime Sponsor.

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

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.