

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2804

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 25, 2016

Title: An act relating to including highway workers employed on a transportation project by a contractor in the tuition and fee exemption for children and surviving spouses of highway workers.

Brief Description: Including highway workers employed on a transportation project by a contractor in the tuition and fee exemption for children and surviving spouses of highway workers.

Sponsors: House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Haler, Clibborn, Moscoso, Stambaugh, Sawyer, Kochmar, Hickel, Zeiger, Ortiz-Self, Sells, Fitzgibbon, Farrell, Reykdal, Springer, Orwall, Muri, Santos, Pettigrew, Ormsby, Goodman, Stokesbary, Kilduff, Orcutt, Fey, Tarleton, Hayes, McBride, Morris, Stanford, Pollet, Frame and Bergquist).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/12/16, 68-25.

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/23/16, 2/25/16 [DPA-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chair; Baumgartner, Vice Chair; Frockt, Ranking Member; Becker, Carlyle, Liias and Miloscia.

Staff: Clint McCarthy (786-7319)

Background: State law authorizes institutions of higher education, defined as state universities, regional universities, The Evergreen State College, and community and technical colleges to grant discretionary and mandatory tuition and fee waivers and exemptions. State and regional universities and The Evergreen State College are generally authorized to grant different waivers than community and technical colleges.

State universities, regional universities, and The Evergreen State College may award discretionary waivers under specified conditions to a variety of individuals, such as foreign students and residents sixty years of age or older. Mandatory waivers must be awarded in specific circumstances to wrongly convicted persons and their children, Washington Scholar

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students, and children and spouses of veterans or National Guard members. In addition, spouses and children of firefighters, state patrol officers, law enforcement officers, and highway workers, who lost their lives or became totally disabled in the line of duty, are exempt from payment of all tuition fees, and services and activities fees. However, children and spouses of highway workers qualify for an exemption only if the highway worker was killed or became disabled while employed by a transportation agency, including agencies, departments, or divisions of state and municipal government, but excluding government contractors.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Amendments): Provides that the cost of the exemption for the tuition fees and services and activities fees for the surviving spouses children of the deceased or disabled highway worker shall be paid from the accident fund and charged to the rate classification established in the Department of Labor and Industries statutes.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Amendments): Clarifies that the cost of the exemption for the tuition fees and services and activities fees for the surviving spouses children of the deceased or disabled highway worker shall be paid from the accident fund and charged to the rate classification established in the Department of Labor and Industries statutes.

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: A friend that was a contracted construction worker lost their life this past year on the SR 520 bridge construction project. The contracted workers work in dangerous conditions. While these workers are eligible for workers' comp, it isn't enough to pay for higher education costs. This benefit would be used very rarely due to the continuing great efforts of contractors and the Department of Labor and Industries to make worksites safer. It is important for this benefit to be available for workers who are harmed in doing the public's work.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Terry Tilton, NW Carpenters; Jerry Vanderwood, AGC; Terry Tilton, NW Carpenters.

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