

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6260

As of January 29, 2016

Title: An act relating to providing postsecondary education to enhance education opportunities and public safety.

Brief Description: Providing postsecondary education to enhance education opportunities and public safety.

Sponsors: Senators Hewitt, Hargrove, Fain and McAuliffe; by request of State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 1/28/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: Clint McCarthy (786-7319)

Background: The Department of Corrections (DOC) contracts with community and technical colleges (CTCs) to provide basic education and job training at each of the state's 12 adult prisons. Every adult prison offers adult basic education programs, which provide foundational education in reading, writing, math, and English language. This includes General Education Development (GED) preparation programs. Several of these adult prisons also offer High School 21+, a competency-based high school diploma program. With High School 21+, students can earn high school credits by proving they have mastered required subjects through past education or life experience. The students then take classes to fill in the gaps and earn a high school diploma. Job-search and anger management courses are also available at every prison.

Under existing statute, education opportunities are limited to basic adult education in the state prison system. DOC is directed to prioritize its resources to meet goals for inmates that relate to obtaining basic adult educational skills, vocational skills, and programs that are in compliance with an offender's individual reentry plan. The DOC is prohibited from using its base appropriation for postsecondary education degree programs. However, the DOC may implement postsecondary education degree programs within state correctional institutions if funds are specifically appropriated for that purpose.

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.

Summary of Bill: The State Board of Community and Technical Colleges may authorize any community or technical college to promote and conduct postsecondary education and training of incarcerated adults through new or expanded partnerships between CTCs and the DOC. Statutes are amended to allow postsecondary education degree programs for inmates in the state prison system within existing appropriations. Permissive language allows the DOC to implement postsecondary education degree programs at state correctional institutions. Inmates that do not meet the DOC's priority criteria for the state-funded postsecondary degree program will be required to pay the costs for participation in a postsecondary degree program. A priority criteria for selecting inmates to participate in the state-funded postsecondary education degree program may have the following conditions considered:

- have less than five years before release;
- do not already have a postsecondary education degree; and
- individual reentry plan includes participation in a postsecondary education degree program.

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: The bill creates a pathway for offenders as they leave the prison system that will keep them out of the prison system. The bill supports Results DOC and Results WA performance measures. There is an excellent partnership between the DOC and the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges. Education reduces recidivism because it engages former prisoners in productive situations. The DOC is not asking for additional funding to implement postsecondary education in the state prisons. The prison to school pipeline provides hope and opportunity. Education is a critical component to someone who has access to society. It takes shackles off of you and allows you to grow into a contributing member of society. This bill is critical to saving people. DOC is in one of the few businesses where repeat customers is a bad thing - this program gives inmates the tools and the means to be productive when they reenter society. To many, this bill is a second chance. It tells inmates that there is a place for them in society and that they can make a positive contribution to society. Privately financed postsecondary education programs in the state have been very successful. This bill will make a positive impact on achieving the attainment goals set forth in the Washington Student Achievement Council Roadmap. Postsecondary education for prisoners works based on all the people who have come to testify and share their story today.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Alex Hurd, Statewide Poverty Action Network; Michelle Conley, Post-Prison Education Program; Willard Jimerson, Post Prison Education Program; Bob Cooper, Post Prison Education Program; Norm Arnold, Living Stones Pastor (Reverend); Mike Paris, Keri Waterland, Department of Corrections; Luke Robins, Peninsula College; Stu Halsun, Centralia College; Brian Walsh, SBCTC; Eddie Parnel, Student; James Jackson, Student, Highline College; Robert Jobin III, Bellingham Technical College Student; John

Christy, Retired, Correctional Officer; Abner Pagunuran, Bellevue College/Washington Student Association; Elissa Goss, Washington Student Association; Nova Gattman, Workforce Board; Maddy Thompson, Washington Student Achievement Council; Gregory Christopher, Tacoma Branch NAACP; Henry Richards, Sunshine Ladies Foundation; Tom Ewell, Faith Action Network; Jeff Beaulac, Student Governmental Liaison The Evergreen State College.

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