CERTIFICATION OF ENROLLMENT

**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5064**

Chapter 125, Laws of 2018

65th Legislature

2018 Regular Session

STUDENT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

EFFECTIVE DATE: June 7, 2018

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| Passed by the Senate March 5, 2018  Yeas 45 Nays 4  CYRUS HABIB  **President of the Senate**  Passed by the House March 2, 2018  Yeas 91 Nays 6  FRANK CHOPP  **Speaker of the House of Representatives** | CERTIFICATE  I, Brad Hendrickson, Secretary of the Senate of the State of Washington, do hereby certify that the attached is **SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5064** as passed by Senate and the House of Representatives on the dates hereon set forth.  BRAD HENDRICKSON  Secretary |
| Approved March 21, 2018 11:11 AM | March 23, 2018 |
| JAY INSLEE  **Governor of the State of Washington** | **Secretary of State**  **State of Washington** |

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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5064**

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AS AMENDED BY THE HOUSE

Passed Legislature - 2018 Regular Session

**State of Washington 65th Legislature 2017 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Fain, Rolfes, Rivers, Pedersen, Ranker, Mullet, Billig, Becker, Braun, King, Darneille, Chase, Carlyle, and Palumbo)

AN ACT Relating to the freedom of expression rights of students at public schools and institutions of higher education; adding a new section to chapter 28A.600 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28B.10 RCW; creating a new section; and prescribing penalties.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that freedom of expression through school-sponsored media is a fundamental principle in our democratic society granted by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and by Article I, section 5 of the state Constitution. It is the intent of the legislature to protect freedom of expression through school-sponsored media for both public school students and students at public institutions of higher education in this state in order to encourage students to become educated, informed, and responsible members of society.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.600 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Student editors of school-sponsored media are responsible for determining the news, opinion, feature, and advertising content of the media subject to the limitations of subsection (2) of this section. This subsection does not prevent a student media adviser from teaching professional standards of English and journalism to the student journalists. A student media adviser may not be terminated, transferred, removed, or otherwise disciplined for complying with this section.

(2) School officials may only prohibit student expression that:

(a) Is libelous or slanderous;

(b) Is an unwarranted invasion of privacy;

(c) Violates federal or state laws, rules, or regulations;

(d) Incites students to violate federal or state laws, rules, or regulations;

(e) Violates school district policy or procedure related to harassment, intimidation, or bullying pursuant to RCW 28A.300.285 or the prohibition on discrimination pursuant to RCW 28A.642.010;

(f) Inciting of students so as to create a clear and present danger of:

(i) The commission of unlawful acts on school premises;

(ii) The violation of lawful school district policy or procedure; or

(iii) The material and substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school. A school official must base a forecast of material and substantial disruption on specific facts, including past experience in the school and current events influencing student behavior, and not on undifferentiated fear or apprehension; or

(g) Is in violation of the federal communications act or applicable federal communication commission rules or regulations.

(3) Political expression by students in school-sponsored media shall not be deemed the use of public funds for political purposes, for purposes of the prohibitions of RCW 42.17A.550.

(4) Any student, individually or through his or her parent or guardian, enrolled in a public high school may file an appeal of any alleged violation of subsection (1) of this section pursuant to chapter 28A.645 RCW.

(5) Expression made by students in school-sponsored media is not necessarily the expression of school policy. Neither a school official nor the governing board of the school or school district may be held responsible in any civil or criminal action for any expression made or published by students in school-sponsored media.

(6) Each school district that includes a high school shall adopt a written student freedom of expression policy in accordance with this section. The policy may include reasonable provisions for the time, place, and manner of student expression.

(7) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(a) "School-sponsored media" means any matter that is prepared, substantially written, published, or broadcast by student journalists, that is distributed or generally made available, either free of charge or for a fee, to members of the student body, and that is prepared under the direction of a student media adviser. "School-sponsored media" does not include media that is intended for distribution or transmission solely in the classrooms in which they are produced.

(b) "Student journalist" means a student who gathers, compiles, writes, edits, photographs, records, or prepares information for dissemination in school-sponsored media.

(c) "Student media adviser" means a person who is employed, appointed, or designated by the school to supervise, or provide instruction relating to, school-sponsored media.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28B.10 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Students at institutions of higher education have the right to exercise freedom of speech and of the press in school-sponsored media, whether or not the media are supported financially by the school or by use of school facilities, or are produced in conjunction with a class. All school-sponsored media produced primarily by students at an institution of higher education are public forums for expression by the student journalists and student editors at the particular institution. Student media, whether school-sponsored or nonschool sponsored, are not subject to mandatory prior review by school officials.

(2) Student editors of school-sponsored media are responsible for determining the news, opinion, feature, and advertising content of the media. This subsection does not prevent a student media adviser from teaching professional standards of English and journalism to the student journalists. A student media adviser may not be terminated, transferred, removed, or otherwise disciplined for refusing to suppress the protected free expression rights of student journalists.

(3) Nothing in this section may be interpreted to authorize expression by students that:

(a) Is libelous or slanderous;

(b) Constitutes an unwarranted invasion of privacy;

(c) Violates the federal communications act or any rule or regulation of the federal communications commission; or

(d) So incites students as to create a clear and present danger of:

(i) The commission of unlawful acts on school premises;

(ii) The violation of lawful school regulations, policies, or procedures; or

(iii) The material and substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school. A school official must base a forecast of material and substantial disruption on specific facts, including past experience in the school and current events influencing student behavior, and not on undifferentiated fear or apprehension.

(4) Any student enrolled in an institution of higher education may commence a civil action to obtain appropriate injunctive and declaratory relief as determined by a court for a violation of subsection (1) of this section by the institution of higher education. Upon a motion, a court may award reasonable attorneys' fees to a prevailing plaintiff in a civil action brought under this section.

(5) Expression made by students in school-sponsored media is not the expression of school policy. Neither a school official nor the governing board of any institution of higher education may be held responsible in any civil or criminal action for any expression made or published by students in school-sponsored media unless school officials or the governing board have interfered with or altered the content of the student expression.

(6) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(a) "School-sponsored media" means any matter that is prepared, substantially written, published, or broadcast by student journalists, that is distributed or generally made available, either free of charge or for a fee, to members of the student body, and that is prepared under the direction of a student media adviser. "School-sponsored media" does not include media that is intended for distribution or transmission solely in the classrooms in which they are produced.

(b) "Student journalist" means a student who gathers, compiles, writes, edits, photographs, records, or prepares information for dissemination in school-sponsored media.

(c) "Student media adviser" means a person who is employed, appointed, or designated by the school to supervise, or provide instruction relating to, school-sponsored media.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected.

**--- END ---**

Passed by the Senate March 5, 2018.

Passed by the House March 2, 2018.

Approved by the Governor March 21, 2018.

Filed in Office of Secretary of State March 23, 2018.