

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2037

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to student services for students with disabilities.

Brief Description: Reauthorizing the work group concerned with removing obstacles for higher education students with disabilities.

Sponsors: Representatives Frame, Haler, Ryu, Pollet, Stambaugh, Kagi, Kilduff, Tarleton, Fitzgibbon, Jinkins, Bergquist and McDonald.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/14/17, 2/15/17 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Extends the expiration date of the Disabilities Services Transfer workgroup and requires the workgroup to continue working on a plan to remove obstacles for students with disabilities.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Minority Member; Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Orwall, Sells, Stambaugh and Tarleton.

Staff: Trudes Tango (786-7384).

Background:

Based on federal and state laws, reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities must be provided as appropriate for all aspects of college and university life, including recruitment, applications, enrollment, registration, financial aid, coursework, research, academic counseling, housing programs, and nonacademic services.

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.

Last session, the Legislature passed Substitute Senate Bill 6466, which required the Council of Presidents (COP) to convene a workgroup to develop a plan for removing obstacles for students with disabilities. The workgroup included:

- representatives from the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, four-year institutions, Washington Student Achievement Council, and statewide student associations; and
- at least two students with disabilities selected by student associations.

The workgroup's plan focused on standardizing medical documentation requirements, standardizing intake and review procedures, and developing best practices for institutions to provide outreach to students. The workgroup met six times during the interim, conducted a student survey, and among other things, developed best practices that focus on different stages of the transfer process. The COP created a report to the Legislature in December of 2016.

The legislation creating the workgroup is set to expire on August 1, 2017.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The expiration date of the workgroup is extended to August 1, 2018. The workgroup must continue developing a plan that focuses on removing obstacles for students with disabilities. The workgroup's plan must also focus on addressing changing methods of delivering course content, availability of course materials in an accessible manner, and the supplemental course material provided by third parties.

The COP must provide the plan to the Higher Education committees of the Legislature by December 31, 2017.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The original bill required the plan to focus on improving overall access for students with disabilities, include addressing conditions under which accommodations were not provided, such as in supplemental electronic course materials.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Last year's bill was trying to address barriers for students with disabilities having trouble getting accommodations when they transfer from two-year to four-year institutions. There was the hope that the workgroup would develop a standardized form that students can use at all institutions, but the form is not yet complete. One main issue for students is the requirement to redocument their disability for the new institution. A common release form will help with that problem. This bill allows the workgroup to continue and asks them to look at the electronic supplemental materials for disabled students.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) The Council of Presidents voluntarily absorbed the costs of the workgroup last year, but there were some issues about finding spaces to meet. The bill needs to be clarified regarding the workgroup looking at electronic course materials.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Frame, prime sponsor; Anna Nepomuceno, Associated Students of the University of Washington–Tacoma; and Paul Bell.

(Other) Cody Eccles, Council of Presidents.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.