

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5241

As of February 3, 2017

Title: An act relating to the educational success of youth in foster care.

Brief Description: Concerning the educational success of youth in foster care.

Sponsors: Senators Carlyle, O'Ban, Darneille, Hasegawa and Wellman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/30/17.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires school districts to grant and consolidate partial credit and coursework to eliminate academic and nonacademic barriers for students in foster care.
- Directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction to adopt rules to implement these requirements.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

Background: Dependent Students. Current law requires school districts to have certain procedures to help the on-time grade level progression and graduation of dependent students. Dependent, in this case, means abandoned; abused or neglected by a person legally responsible for the care of the child; has no parent, guardian, or custodian capable of adequately caring for the child; or receives extended foster care services.

Waiver of Courses. School districts must waive specific courses required for graduation if similar coursework has been satisfactorily completed in another school district or must provide reasonable justification for denial. Should a waiver not be granted to a student who would qualify to graduate from the sending school district, the receiving school district must use best efforts to provide an alternative means of acquiring required coursework so that graduation may occur on time.

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.

Consolidating Coursework. School districts are encouraged to consolidate unresolved or incomplete coursework and provide opportunities for credit accrual through local classroom hours, correspondence courses, or the portable assisted study sequence units designed for migrant high school students.

Summary of Bill: Waiver of Courses. When a waiver of a specific course has not been granted, school districts must, rather than use best efforts to, provide an alternative means of acquiring required coursework so that graduation may occur on time.

Granting Partial Credit. For students who have been unable to complete an academic course and receive full credit due to withdrawal or transfer, school districts must grant partial credit for coursework completed before the date of withdrawal or transfer. The receiving school must accept those credits, apply them to the student's academic progress or graduation or both, and allow the student to earn credits regardless of the student's date of enrollment in the receiving school.

Consolidating Coursework and Partial Credit. School districts must, rather than encouraged to, consolidate partial credit, unresolved, or incomplete coursework and provide opportunities for credit accrual in a manner that eliminates academic and nonacademic barriers for the student.

Rules. The Superintendent of Public Instruction must adopt and distribute to all school districts lawful and reasonable rules prescribing the substantive and procedural obligations of school districts to implement these provisions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Youth in the foster care system often have to move to many different schools, and they are doing so not on their own volition. Each time these youth move, they may have to repeat certain academic courses. This bill allows students to earn credit despite these transitions, which is a practice that is inclusive, encouraging, and engaging. Homeless youth should be included in this bill. This would align well with the Every Student Succeeds Act, which recognizes the challenges of school transitions for youth in foster care and youth experiencing homelessness. These challenges include falling behind academically, dropping out of school, and lacking a strong and consistent support system. This bill will help school districts establish clear protocols to help the on-time grade level progression and graduation of students in foster care.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Mary-Anne Thomas, King County Youth Advisory Council; Janis Avery, Treehouse; Jess Lewis, OSPI; Kim Justice, Office of Homeless Youth, Department of Commerce; Katara Jordan, Building Changes; James Sheard, The Mockingbird Society.

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