

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5433

As Reported by House Committee On:
College & Workforce Development

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

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

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Wilson, C., Nguyen, Das, Darneille, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Kuderer and Saldaña).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

College & Workforce Development: 3/20/19, 3/28/19 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill
(As Amended by Committee)**

- Requires the Department of Corrections (DOC), the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and the Office of the Chief Information Officer to report on a plan to implement secure Internet connections and expanded postsecondary educational opportunities for incarcerated adults.
- Permits the DOC to conduct a proof-of-concept pilot at a correctional institution for a secure Internet connection for the purpose of offender postsecondary education.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COLLEGE & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Entenman, Vice Chair; Leavitt, Vice Chair; Bergquist, Mead, Paul, Pollet, Ramos, Rude, Sells, Slatter, Sutherland and Young.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Van Werven, Ranking Minority Member; Gildon, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Kraft.

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

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.

Background:

The Department of Corrections (DOC) contracts with eight community and technical colleges to offer basic education for adults and workforce education programs at each of the state's 12 correctional institutions. Basic education includes high school equivalency preparation, English as a second language, computer literacy, the High School 21+ program, and precollege instruction. Workforce programs allow offenders to earn college certificates in subjects such as horticulture, carpentry, mechanics, construction, maintenance, and baking.

In 2017 the DOC was authorized to fund associate workforce degrees at state correctional institutions. Incarcerated adults who meet certain priority criteria may be selected to participate in the programs. Priority is given to incarcerated adults within five years of release, to those who do not already possess a postsecondary degree, and to those with an individual reentry plan that includes participation in an associate workforce degree program offered at their correctional institution. Incarcerated adults who do not meet the priority criteria may still participate in the programs, but must pay the cost themselves. Incarcerated adults who are sentenced to life without the possibility of release or who are sentenced to death may not participate in state-funded associate workforce degree programs.

For the 2017–18 academic year, incarcerated adults participating in programs offered by the community and technical colleges earned:

- 90 high school diplomas through the High School 21+ program;
- 831 General Education Development (GED) certificates;
- 1,933 vocational certificates; and
- 53 associate degrees in business, business management, automotive collision repair, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, and welding.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The DOC, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), and the Office of the Chief Information Officer must submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature by December 1, 2019, on the following:

- a plan for implementing secure Internet connections for postsecondary education purposes;
- the barriers and costs associated with implementing secure Internet connections;
- a review of the fiscal impacts, including any estimated capital and operating costs associated with expanding current educational opportunities and training to incarcerated adults through expanded partnerships with the community and technical colleges; and
- a plan for implementing expanded postsecondary degree opportunities, including the estimated time period necessary.

The DOC may conduct a proof-of-concept pilot at one correctional institution for a new secure internet connection for offender postsecondary education. The results from the proof-of-concept pilot must be used to inform the report to the Legislature.

Intent language is modified to replace associate degrees with postsecondary education. The statute expires December 31, 2019.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill:

The amended bill removes the prohibition on the DOC implementing a secure Internet connection before the report is submitted to the Legislature. Instead, the DOC is permitted to conduct a proof-of-concept pilot for secure Internet. The pilot must be used to inform the report to the Legislature.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended 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) Education is the pathway out, regardless of whether you are in prison or not. Providing offenders with education reduces recidivism, offers greater opportunity for employment, and research shows it reduces violence among inmates. Education is necessary to earn a living wage, and allowing access to education helps level the playing field. For every dollar of investment there is a return of \$20. Courses are no longer accessible via pen and paper. Placement testing that is used to determine competency will no longer be available via paper. The GED test is already only administered by Internet. If an offender has to wait until release to get these credentials, then they cannot get what they need to be successful.

The DOC has been working with the Department of Enterprise Services, the SBCTC, and the Office of the Chief Information Officer to implement secure Internet. There is a potential solution through a secure cloud-based service, and Amazon has agreed to provide this free of cost for a pilot. However, the amendment that was added to the bill would prevent the DOC from moving forward on a proof-of-concept pilot.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Wilson, C., prime sponsor; Loretta Taylor, Department of Corrections; Pat Seibert-Love, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; and Erik Harestad.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.