

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5231

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education & Workforce Development, February 5, 2019

Title: An act relating to veteran survivor tuition waiver eligibility.

Brief Description: Concerning veteran survivor tuition waiver eligibility.

Sponsors: Senators Bailey, Wagoner, Becker, Zeiger, Honeyford, Padden, Short and Wilson, L..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/31/19, 2/05/19 [DP-WM].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows children of eligible veterans or National Guard members to receive tuition and fee waivers before age eighteen and after age twenty-six in certain circumstances.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Palumbo, Chair; Randall, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Member; Brown, Liias and Wellman.

Staff: Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

Background: Washington Military Tuition Waiver. Higher education institutions may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for an eligible veteran or National Guard member, subject to limitations. An eligible veteran or National Guard member is a Washington resident who was on active or reserve duty in the United States Armed Forces, or a National Guard member called to active duty who served in a war or conflict fought on foreign soil or in international waters and if discharged from service, was discharged honorably.

Washington higher education institutions may also waive tuition for veterans or National Guard members who did not serve on foreign soil, in international waters, or in another

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location in support of those serving on foreign soil or international waters, but the institution receives no state general fund support for these waivers.

Higher education institutions must waive all tuition and fees for:

- a child and the surviving spouse or domestic partner, of an eligible veteran or National Guard member who became totally disabled as a result of active service, or who is a prisoner of war; and
- a child and the surviving spouse or domestic partner of an eligible veteran or National Guard member who lost their life as a result of serving in active duty.

A child must be a Washington resident between the age of seventeen and twenty-six to be eligible for this tuition waiver.

Federal Periods of Eligibility. A child of a person who died in service or has a total disability related to serving in the United States Armed Forces is eligible for federal educational assistance if the child is between the age of eighteen and twenty-six or successfully completed secondary schooling. The child may also be eligible for educational assistance before turning age eighteen or for an extended period past the age of 26 under eight defined circumstances.

Summary of Bill: A child of a veteran or National Guard member is eligible for a full tuition waiver at a higher education institution in Washington if one of the child's parents became totally disabled as a result of active service, was a prisoner of war, or lost their life as a result of serving in active duty, and the child:

- is a Washington resident between the age of seventeen and twenty-six; or
- meets one of eight federal requirements for receiving education assistance.

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: This bill provides access to a group of students who have been restricted access to this tuition waiver. We support increasing eligibility for this waiver consistent with federal policy. We would also like to have a broader conversation about access and tuition waivers at institutions of higher education. These gold star families have been through a lot and have earned this waiver. This benefit is a very big deal to those families.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Barbara Bailey, Prime Sponsor; Ted Wicorek, Veterans Legislative Coalition; Phil Watson, citizen; Ruben Flores, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

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