

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6142

As Passed Senate, February 18, 2020

Title: An act relating to creating the Washington common application.

Brief Description: Creating the Washington common application.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Liias, Randall, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Mullet, Nguyen, Stanford, Carlyle and Wilson, C.; by request of Lieutenant Governor).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/16/20, 2/04/20 [DPS-WM].

Ways & Means: 2/10/20, 2/11/20 [DPS (HEWD)].

Floor Activity:

Passed Senate: 2/18/20, 48-0.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Requires the public four-year institutions of higher education to enroll in the same preexisting online application with at least 500 participants, subject to amounts appropriated.
- Allows the public four-year institutions of higher education to also adopt a second preexisting online common application.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6142 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

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

Staff: Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

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.

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Rolfes, Chair; Frockt, Vice Chair, Operating, Capital Lead; Mullet, Capital Budget Cabinet; Brown, Assistant Ranking Member, Operating; Honeyford, Assistant Ranking Member, Capital; Becker, Billig, Carlyle, Conway, Darneille, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Hunt, Keiser, Liias, Muzzall, Pedersen, Rivers, Schoesler, Van De Wege, Wagoner, Warnick and Wilson, L..

Staff: Michele Alishahi (786-7433)

Background: Higher education institutions in Washington have authority to determine individual admissions policies and procedures. Some state systems, such as the University of California, have adopted a single systemwide undergraduate application for admission. Alternatively, some colleges and universities have opted-in to nationally recognized and standardized college application tools such as the Common App or the Coalition Application.

College application fees for prospective students range from \$50 to \$80 at public colleges and universities in Washington State. Most institutions make application fee waivers available to students, with variability in income level required to obtain the waiver, and different processes for applying for the waiver.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: Subject to amounts appropriated specifically for this purpose, the public four-year higher education institutions are required enroll in the same preexisting online application. The application must:

- include more than 500 institutional participants; and
- have an established fee waiver process for low-income students.

The public four-year higher education institutions are permitted to also adopt a second preexisting online common application as long as it has at least 100 institutional participants and includes a fee waiver process for low-income students.

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 on Proposed Substitute (Higher Education & Workforce Development): *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: These policies are ideas that can remove non-financial barriers to higher education and create equitable privilege. They have all been tested in other states. If someone goes to Wellesley or Columbia they do not have to fill out a separate application, they can apply to both through the common app. In our state you have to fill out an application for each college which is largely redundant. This may be prohibitive for students that do not have access to coaching and mentoring. This is designed to support the student in applying to more than one institution without the time and hoops required under current practices. Some barriers to access to higher education for first generation students include

both the fees and ease of access in applying. This bill makes that process simpler. Institutions that adopt the common app have seen increases in applications and admissions. There are significant benefits to students including simplifying the application process and the fee waiver process. I have always wanted to go to college but I struggled to find the funds to apply. I generally finished applications right at the deadline because in addition to school I work. In addition to each application I had to navigate separate applications for fee waivers. I appreciate that this bill would streamline that.

OTHER: The community and technical college system have a uniform application that they have used for years. We are supportive of the intent but want to find a solution to make this workable for our higher education partners. We are currently a member of the coalition app and our concerns on this bill are addressed if participation in that meets the requirements of the bill. We wholeheartedly agree with the intent of this bill and simplifying this process. You can apply to CWU in 15 minutes on your phone. We have increased applications for underrepresented student groups. We would be willing to participate in the coalition app or the common app. A lot of our concern is around the Washington unified application and the costs there. We want to make sure we can do this right.

Persons Testifying (Higher Education & Workforce Development): PRO: Senator Marko Liias, Prime Sponsor; Michelle Jimenez, Student, Washington World Fellows; Cyrus Habib, Office of the Lieutenant Governor; Mary Chikwinya, Director of Higher Education, Office of the Lieutenant Governor.

OTHER: Scott Copeland, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Joe Dacca, University of Washington; Steve DuPont, Central Washington University; Paul Francis, Council of Presidents; Juliette Schindler Kelly, College Success Foundation.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Higher Education & Workforce Development): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on First Substitute (Ways & Means): PRO: Other states have joined the national common app platform. There are many benefits for this new way of applying to college. They are worthy investments. The most important work is related to the start up costs for implementing the application.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Joe Dacca, University of Washington.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.