

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1556

As Passed House:

March 5, 2025

Title: An act relating to tuition waivers for high school completers at community and technical colleges.

Brief Description: Expanding tuition waivers for high school completers at community and technical colleges.

Sponsors: Representatives Entenman, Davis, Leavitt, Ortiz-Self, Reed, Kloba, Pollet, Hill and Simmons; by request of State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Postsecondary Education & Workforce: 2/4/25, 2/11/25 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/5/25, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Eliminates the requirement that a student must be 19 years of age or older for governing boards of community and technical colleges to waive all or a portion of high school diploma or certificate course fees.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 16 members: Representatives Paul, Chair; Nance, Vice Chair; McEntire, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Entenman, Graham, Keaton, Leavitt, Ley, Mendoza, Pollet, Reed, Rude, Salahuddin, Schmidt, Thomas and Timmons.

Staff: Saranda Ross (786-7068).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Washington residents 16 years of age or older may receive a high school equivalency certificate if they have been adjudged by a school district as possessing a substantial and warranted reason for leaving the regular high school education program. Otherwise, eligible residents must be 19 years of age or older.

Community and technical colleges offer high school diploma and completion programs, as well as Basic Education for Adults classes and programs to prepare students to pass the General Educational Development (GED) exam. After passing the four-part GED exam, an individual receives a certificate showing that they have the same level of knowledge as a high school graduate.

Governing boards of community and technical colleges may waive all or a portion of high school diploma or certificate course tuition and service and activity fees for resident students 19 years of age or older. Such fees are \$25 per quarter and some community and technical colleges charge an additional \$10 technology fee.

Summary of Bill:

The requirement that a student must be 19 years of age or older for governing boards of community and technical colleges to waive all or a portion of high school diploma or certificate course fees is eliminated.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill acknowledges the reality of who is in school today by lowering the age requirement for students who can qualify for a fee waiver in Washington's high school completion and General Educational Development (GED) programs to 16 years old. There is no expectation that this waiver expansion will increase the number of students seeking their GED or high school completion certificate. This bill is revenue neutral based on how these programs are administered. Many colleges are already exploring ways to accelerate secondary credentials and degrees needed to successfully enter the workforce—this bill will provide an opportunity to expand these efforts to all students.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Debra Entenman, prime sponsor; John Axtell; Troy Goracke, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; and Morgan

McCluskey.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.