

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5087

As of January 20, 2025

Title: An act relating to the establishment of legal education programs at community and technical colleges.

Brief Description: Establishing legal education programs at community and technical colleges.

Sponsors: Senators Torres, Dozier, Warnick and Wellman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/20/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a program to establish certified paralegal education programs east of the Cascade Mountains.
- Requires certain community and technical colleges to offer a prelaw associates degree if funding is provided.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Kellee Gunn (786-7429)

Background: Approved Paralegal Education Programs. The American Bar Association (ABA) certifies Approved Paralegal Education Programs. The ABA defines a paralegal as a person, qualified by education, training or work experience who is employed or retained by a lawyer, law office, corporation, governmental agency or other entity and who performs specifically delegated substantive legal work for which a lawyer is responsible. There are five ABA approved paralegal programs at community and technical colleges in the state. Those programs are located at: South Puget Sound Community College, Tacoma Community College, Edmonds College, Highline College, and Spokane Community

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.

College.

Summary of Bill: Approved Paralegal Education Programs. Subject to amounts appropriated for this purpose, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) must develop a program to support any board of trustees east of the Cascade Mountains to establish an ABA certified Approved Paralegal Education Program where they are not currently offered. The goal shall be to establish one program in central Washington and one in eastern Washington. The SBCTC's program shall give financial support to CTCs to develop these paralegal programs.

Prelaw Associate's Degree Programs. Subject to appropriation, Columbia Basin College, Yakima Valley College, and Walla Walla College must offer a prelaw associate's degree.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 12, 2025.

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 is to require CTCs in Central WA to create a prelaw education program. An amendment was requested for this bill, to remove the names of the specific schools.

There is a huge bottleneck in bringing people to trial in Yakima County. This bottleneck creates disfunction in the legal system. This is a tool to help the process move more quickly. This is also about keeping communities safe. We have added hiring bonuses and retaining bonuses, which helps, but we are still competing against the private sector.

OTHER: Colleges consult with their communities on what their academic offerings should be. Section 2 requires these programs to be approved by the ABA, but should say "in consultation with the ABA."

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Nikki Torres, Prime Sponsor; Russell Brown, WA Association of Prosecuting Attorneys; LaDon Linde, Yakima County Commissioner.

OTHER: Arlen Harris.

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