

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SHB 2583

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to community and technical college part-time academic employee health care benefits.

Brief Description: Regarding community and technical college part-time academic employee health benefits.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Kenney, Cox, Conway, Hasegawa, Roberts, Appleton, Upthegrove, Morrell, Linville, Hunt, Dickerson and Ormsby).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education & Workforce Education: 1/20/06, 2/2/06 [DPS];
Appropriations: 2/4/06 [DP2S(w/o sub HEWE)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/9/06, 98-0.
Passed Senate: 3/8/06, 46-0.
Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Maintains uninterrupted health care benefits for part-time academic employees at community and technical colleges provided the employee establishes and maintains a pattern of working at least three of the four quarters of the academic year with an average workload of half-time or more.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Kenney, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Cox, Ranking Minority Member; Rodne, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buri, Dunn, Fromhold, Hasegawa, Jarrett, Ormsby, Priest, Roberts and Sommers.

Staff: Nina Oman (786-7152).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Education. Signed by 30 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McDonald, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Bailey, Buri, Chandler, Clements, Cody, Conway, Darneille, Dunshee, Grant, Haigh, Hinkle, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Linville, McDermott, Miloscia, Pearson, Priest, Schual-Berke, P. Sullivan, Talcott and Walsh.

Staff: Brian Enslow (786-7143).

Background:

Part-time academic employees at community and technical colleges who work half-time or more are currently eligible for health benefits beginning the second quarter they are employed half-time or more. They are also currently eligible for health benefits over the summer quarter even if they work under half-time, as long as they have worked half-time or more in three of the four quarters preceding summer.

However, if an employee works under half-time for one quarter, that employee loses benefit coverage for that quarter as well as for the following summer quarter.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill:

Sections are added to the Health Care Authority statutes that describe health care benefit coverage for part-time academic employees at community and technical colleges.

Part-time academic employees at community and technical colleges who have established eligibility for health care benefits are eligible for continuation of their health care benefits over the summer if they have worked an average of half-time or more in each of the preceding two academic years through employment at one or more community or technical college districts.

Uninterrupted health care benefits for part-time academic employees at community and technical colleges are maintained as long as the employee continues to work at least three of the four quarters of the academic year with an average academic workload of half-time or more.

Continuous health care benefit coverage ceases at the end of the academic year if the employee has not maintained at least a half-time average academic workload over three of the four quarters of the academic year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available on the substitute bill. New fiscal note requested on the second substitute bill.

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

Testimony For: (Higher Education & Workforce Education) (In support) Part-time employees are important to the flexibility of the two-year colleges. Some part-time faculty whose coverage is not continued must face the difficult choice of spending their income on self-pay insurance or going to public health clinics. Faculty would like to see the same physician consistently. The colleges currently have a system for keeping track of employees working at multiple colleges. Adding an emergency clause would prevent another group of faculty from losing their health benefits this summer.

(With concerns) Concerns include potential costs to other agencies, adequate funding for implementation, and clarification that the Health Care Authority is the state agency responsible for adopting rules.

Testimony For: (Appropriations) This bill is reflective of a collaborative effort. This does not create a new eligibility; all this does is maintain their eligibility so that they continue their benefits if they fall below 50 percent for one quarter, but maintain a yearly average of over 50 percent. The State Board already tracks eligibility. This bill should not create an additional workload.

This is an important benefit to part-time faculty, and one that arguably has already been earned. This bill ensures that they receive this benefit. The Washington Education Association hopes that the State Board can find cost-effective ways to administer this program.

The State Board supports the bill. However, part-time faculty eligibility rules for health care are already fairly complex. Our current payroll system is not designed to track the existing rules; we have to track those manually. Allowing for averaging would require tracking thousands of additional employees.

Testimony Against: (Higher Education & Workforce Education) None.

Testimony Against: (Appropriations) None.

Persons Testifying: (Higher Education & Workforce Education) (In support) John Boesenberg, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Federation of Teachers; and Louis Watanabe, Bellevue Community College and Part-time Faculty Association;

(With concerns) Dennis Martin, Washington State Health Care Authority.

Persons Testifying: (Appropriations) (In support) John Boesenberg, State Board of Community and Technical Colleges; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, American Federation of Teachers-Washington; and Gary King, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Higher Education & Workforce Education) None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Appropriations) None.