

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2139

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to mandatory school attendance.

Brief Description: Lowering the age of mandatory school attendance.

Sponsors: Representatives Eide, Dorn, Carlson, Brumsickle, Roland, Karahalios, Orr, Johanson, King, Wineberry, Basich, Romero, Springer, H. Myers, B. Thomas and Jones.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Education, February 3, 1994, DPS.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 16 members: Representatives Dorn, Chair; Cothorn, Vice Chair; B. Thomas, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Brumsickle; Carlson; G. Cole; Eide; Hansen; Holm; Jones; Karahalios; J. Kohl; Patterson; Pruitt; Roland and L. Thomas.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Brough, Ranking Minority Member; and Stevens.

Staff: Robert Butts (786-7111).

Background: Current law requires a child from eight years of age to under 18 years of age to attend a public school unless the child attends a private school, is receiving home-based instruction, or has been excused by the school district superintendent for specified reasons.

According to information published by the Department of Education in 1989, two other states require enrollment beginning at age eight. All other states require enrollment at either age five, six, or seven.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Current law is amended to require children seven years of age on midnight August 31 to attend a public school unless the child attends a private school, is receiving home-based instruction, or has been

excused by the school district superintendent for specified reasons.

Current law is amended to not require home-school students younger than eight years of age to have an annual assessment or standardized test.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The minimum age of mandatory attendance was lowered to seven, instead of six. A provision was added to specify that assessments for home-schooled students are not required until the age of eight. Language was added regarding parent consultation when students are excused from school.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect August 31, 1994.

Testimony For: There is strong evidence that early education helps children. We need to provide educational opportunities for those children who are being deprived of an education even though the percentage of children not going to school or being home-schooled is small. This also will help in cases where a five or six year old child is abused at home, and taken out of school by the parents until the bruises are healed.

Testimony Against: There is no evidence that says it makes sense to have children in school at the age of six. At this age, kids need more time with their parents, not other children. Many children, especially boys, are very immature at age six.

Witnesses: Representative Eide (Prime Sponsor); Jo Herber, American Association of University Women (pro); Barbara Eliason, Washington Association of School Administrators (pro); Susan Patrick, Superintendent of Public Instruction (pro); Dwayne Slate, Washington State School Directors' Association (pro); and Raymond Moore, The Moore Foundation (con).