

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1622

As Reported By House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to the Hispanic American endowed scholarship program.

Brief Description: Establishing the Hispanic American endowed scholarship program.

Sponsors: Representatives Kenney, Carlson, Mason, Van Luven, Sheahan, Radcliff, Butler, Regala, Sullivan, Cody, Wood, Voloria, Tokuda, Kastama, Cooper, Skinner, Dunshee, Constantine, Dickerson, Conway, Anderson, Costa, Schoesler and O'Brien.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/20/97, 2/25/97 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Carlson, Chairman; Radcliff, Vice Chairman; Mason, Ranking Minority Member; Kenney, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Butler; Dunn; O'Brien; Sheahan and Van Luven.

Staff: Marilee Scarbrough (786-7196).

Background: Population & Enrollment. According to population statistics, Hispanic Americans comprise approximately 6.1 percent of Washington's population. They are enrolled in higher education at the lower rate of 4 percent. Hispanic American students participate in greater numbers in lower division courses than in upper division courses. They are also represented in greater numbers in community colleges than in four-year institutions.

Graduation Statistics. A recent study on the status of minority students and faculty in Washington's higher education system indicates a low graduation rate among Hispanic American students. While, on the average, Hispanic American students enroll at approximately 4 percent of the total student enrollment, they are conferred only 2.7 percent of all bachelor's degrees awarded at four-year institutions.

A discrepancy exists between the enrollment and graduation rates among Hispanic American students. This discrepancy may otherwise be characterized as a low

retention rate. Low retention rates among Hispanic American students are attributable to a variety of factors including limited financial resources, inadequate preparation, and difficulty in adjusting to a campus environment.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The bill establishes the Hispanic American Endowed Scholarship Program. The Higher Education Coordinating Board is responsible for administering the program. Its powers and duties are described to include, but not be limited to, establishing both an advisory and a screening committee; selecting scholarship recipients; and soliciting and accepting grants and donations from public and private sources for the program.

Eligibility is described to include a student familiar with the educational and cultural needs of the Hispanic community, who is financially needy, a full-time resident student at an institution of higher education in this state, and who promises to use his or her education to benefit Hispanic Americans.

The board and advisory committee shall develop criteria for selecting scholarship recipients. The criteria shall assess the student's social and cultural ties to an Hispanic American community within the state. The criteria shall include a priority for upper division or graduate students. It may also include a priority for students majoring in a program in which expertise is needed by the state's Hispanic Americans.

The bill establishes the endowment and trust funds. Upon raising \$50,000 in private donations, matching trust funds may be requested by the board to be deposited into the endowment fund. No appropriation is requested in this bill. In order for the board to award scholarships, however, funds would need to be appropriated in the state budget bill.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The definition of eligible student is changed from Hispanic student to a student who is familiar with the educational and cultural needs of the Hispanic community. Technical changes were made to correct RCW references.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Hispanics are underrepresented in Washington's colleges and universities. This bill provides a means for Hispanic students to pursue higher education. The Hispanic population is the fastest growing population in the state of

Washington. Members of the Hispanic community are less likely to borrow for educational loans. There is a great need for scholarship programs. There is a lack of sufficient financial aid funds for Hispanic students. Attending college is an uphill battle without financial aid. There is a tremendous lack of representation of Hispanic students in higher education institutions. Students do not finish college because of a lack of financial opportunities. The legislature should encourage students to enter college and encourage them to finish. This bill could make it possible to send more students to college and reduce the high drop-out rate.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Phyllis Kenney, prime sponsor (pro); Lolo Arevalo, Adelante (pro); Christina Castorena, Western Washington University (pro); Alejandra Narvaez, student (pro); Alma Montes de Oca, student at Washington State University (pro); Tania Fernandez de Castro, Commission on Hispanic Affairs (pro); Carlos Jaques, Walla Walla Community College (pro); Becky Diaz, Whatcom Hispanic Organization (pro); Rogellio Riojas, SAMAR (pro); and Roberto Reyes, Commission on Hispanic Affairs (pro).