

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2333

As Reported By House Committee On:

Education

Title: An act relating to student transportation.

Brief Description: Requiring school districts to allow students who do not have disabilities to use student transportation designed or equipped to transport children with disabilities.

Sponsors: Representatives Hickel, Johnson and B. Thomas.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/23/98, 2/3/98 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Linville; Quall; Smith; Sterk; Sump; Talcott and Veloria.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background: By law, the operation of each school district's student transportation program is the responsibility of the local school board. The board may determine which students will be transported and what routes will be used. State funds for transportation must be spent for that purpose but the district may decide how to spend the funds.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) determines the allocation system for state pupil transportation funds. SPI has adopted rules to create a uniform allocation system. In the allocation system, transportation for basic education students is funded at a different rate than transportation for students with certain disabilities. According to personnel at SPI, a school district will receive an average of \$295 annually for a basic education student. The district will receive an average of \$2000 for an eligible special education student. SPI has adopted workload reporting requirements to monitor the use of the state transportation funds and to ensure that the funds are spent for their intended purpose. According to the agency, certain requirements were intended to prevent school districts from over-reporting special transportation students due to the much higher

funding rate provided for those students. The requirements discourage districts from transporting basic education and special education students on the same bus.

The agency has reported that it intends to change the reporting instructions at the beginning of the 1998-99 school year. The change will allow the districts to transport basic education and special education students on the same bus while protecting the integrity of the special funding.

Summary of Substitute Bill: School districts may allow students whose transportation is funded at basic transportation rates to ride school buses and other forms of transportation funded at special transportation rates.

If districts exercise this authority, they must give seating priority to students that qualify for special transportation funding. In addition, districts that exercise this authority will continue to receive funding at special transportation rates for students who qualify for special rates and funding at basic transportation rates for students who qualify for basic rates.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Districts are permitted rather than required to allow students funded at different transportation rates to ride in the same vehicles. If districts exercise the authority, they are required rather than permitted to give seating priority to students funded at special rates. Districts will not gain or lose money as a result of exercising the authority.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: It makes sense to do this if there is room. It saves money in the long run.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Hickel, prime sponsor; John Jackson, New Definitions, Inc.; Jean Ameluxen, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; Doug Nelson, Public School Employees; and Dwayne Slate, Washington State School Directors' Association (all support).