

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1551

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, April 3, 1997

Title: An act relating to higher education fiscal flexibility.

Brief Description: Increasing fiscal flexibility for institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Representatives Mason, Carlson, Radcliff, Kenney, Cooper, Conway, Costa, Sullivan, Wolfe, Scott, O'Brien and Wood.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 3/25/97, 4/3/97 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Wood, Chair; Winsley, Vice Chair; Bauer, Hale, Kohl and Sheldon.

Staff: Jennifer Hanlon (786-7784)

Background: Public baccalaureate institutions and community colleges may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for students through approximately 35 different tuition waiver programs. There is a statutory maximum on the amount of operating fee revenue that each baccalaureate institution and the community colleges as a whole may waive. The waiver cap ranges from a high of 35 percent for community colleges to a low of 6 percent for The Evergreen State College. There is statutory intent language that suggests that the Legislature will not reduce state support for institutions that do not waive the entire amount of revenue permitted under the cap.

Most waiver programs are designed to help a student with particular circumstances. For example, waivers are permitted for needy students, teaching and research assistants working half-time or more, the children of deceased and disabled firefighters and law enforcement officials, a stipulated number of international students, and active duty military personnel, to name a few. Only one program gives the institutions the flexibility to waive tuition and fees for students with no special circumstances. Under this program, baccalaureate institutions may waive up to 1 percent of their operating fee revenue for any student, except on the basis of intercollegiate athletics. Community colleges have the same authority, but their revenue limit under this program is .075 percent of their operating fee revenue.

Summary of Bill: Each baccalaureate institution may use up to 2 percent of the institution's operating fee revenue to waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for any student, except on the basis of intercollegiate athletics. This authority is subject to the existing statutory waiver cap in effect for each institution.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This is another financial assistance option which is different than financial aid. It does not impact the operating budget and provides the institutions with some autonomy. These waivers increase the diversity at each institution.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Dawn Mason, prime sponsor; Martha Lindley, CWU.