

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5833

As of February 24, 1997

Title: An act relating to tuition stability.

Brief Description: Stabilizing tuition during the time a student is enrolled at a state institution of higher education.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl, Wood, Spanel, Winsley, Bauer, Prince, McAuliffe, Patterson, Goings and Oke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/25/97.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

Background: From the early 1980's through 1995, students paid a statutory percentage of the cost of their education as tuition. The percentage varied by type of public institution and student category. Tuition rates were automatically adjusted based on the amount it had cost to educate students the previous biennium. The percentage rates were essentially unchanged from 1981 until 1993 when the Legislature increased the percentages for 1993-94 and again for 1994-95. Many factors led to substantial increases in tuition and increases in tuition's share of the cost of education.

In 1995 the Legislature removed the direct link to the cost of instruction and instead set forth, in statute, the dollar amounts for tuition at the public institutions for residents and nonresidents enrolled as undergraduate, graduate, or professional students. The 1996 Legislature, by setting forth an amount in statute, again increased nonresident undergraduate tuition at the two research institutions.

Some claim that these fluctuating increases in tuition make it difficult for parents and students to plan for the cost of a baccalaureate degree. It is also claimed that stability and predictability of tuition rates allow students and families a reasonable opportunity to plan the financing of their education.

Summary of Bill: Resident undergraduate students do not experience a tuition increase until they have earned 180 credits, exceeded being a full-time student for four consecutive years, or exceeded being a part-time student for eight consecutive years. If a student transfers, before meeting the time or credit limits, the student pays the tuition in effect for that institution on the first day of the academic year when the student first enrolled as a resident undergraduate student.

The state pays the difference between the tuition paid by the student and the rate in effect at the time.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 14,1997.

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