

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4020

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education

Brief Description: Requesting parental involvement with the education of special education students.

Revised for 1st Substitute: Requesting a review of special education paperwork.

Sponsors: Representatives Wensman, Quall, Cox, Keiser, Talcott, Rockefeller, Thomas, Haigh, Carlson, Schindler, D. Schmidt, Sump, Mulliken, Benson, Barlean, H. Sommers, Pennington, Lisk, Dunn, Delvin, McDonald, Schual-Berke, O'Brien and Esser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/24/00, 2/4/00 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- The Legislature asks that Congress pass, and the President approve, legislation that will modify the paperwork requirements for special education students.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Democratic Co-Chair; Talcott, Republican Co-Chair; Haigh, Democratic Vice Chair; Schindler, Republican Vice Chair; Carlson; Keiser; Rockefeller; Santos; D. Schmidt; Schual-Berke; Stensen; Thomas and Wensman.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

More than 115,000 of Washington's children receive one or more special education services. Children from birth to age twenty-one are entitled to receive these services if

they have a disability that has an adverse educational impact and if they need specially designed instruction to mitigate the adverse impacts. During the 1999-2001 biennium, Washington has budgeted \$933,656,000 for special education programs. About 84 percent of those funds are provided from the state general fund. Special education services are based on four key concepts. Special education students are entitled to a free and appropriate public education, provided through the least restrictive environment, under the guidance of an individual education program. In addition, the students are entitled to procedural safeguards and due process to protect their rights. These concepts are embodied in state and federal special education laws. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction has incorporated federal regulations on special education into the state rules governing the programs. The office provides but does not require the use of model reporting forms.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Legislature asks that Congress pass, and the President approve, legislation that will modify the paperwork requirements for special education students. The parents and teachers of the children would determine the appropriate amount and type of paperwork needed to protect the students while helping them achieve their academic goals. The memorial lists the reasons that additional paperwork is unnecessary.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The reasons for the request to Congress and the President are focused on the effect that the required paperwork has on the educational process and the inability of educators to understand where the requirements originate. The memorial also includes a commitment that the state and school districts will work together to reduce state and local paperwork requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The paperwork requirements for special education students are burdensome and often add nothing to the education of the children involved. For example, certain rules require teachers to fill out paperwork verifying that they have filled out other paperwork. It is not clear to teachers and staff where the requirements arise, or how they align. Some of the requirements are federal, some state, and some originate in the school districts. Together, they require about one-third of a teacher's work load. Much of that time could be spent helping students. Issues such as due process concerns may be driving many of the requirements. Although the reasons behind

the documents may be laudable, the effect is a diminishment of educational quality for the students involved. Any effort the Legislature can make to reduce the paperwork requirements would be welcomed by teachers and parents.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition; Dan Phelan, Lake Washington School District; and Linda Hawkins, Bellevue School District.