

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1235

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to educational assistance for teachers.

Brief Description: Providing educational assistance for teachers.

Sponsors: Representatives Keiser, Cox, Quall, Kenney, Rockefeller, O'Brien, Talcott, Santos, Kessler, Lovick, McIntire, D. Schmidt, Ruderman, Schual-Berke, Poulsen, Kagi, Edmonds and Haigh.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/1/01, 2/15/01 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Providing tuition assistance to educators assigned to teach subjects in which they do not have required endorsements.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Quall, Democratic Co-Chair; Talcott, Republican Co-Chair; Anderson, Republican Vice Chair; Haigh, Democratic Vice Chair; Cox, Ericksen, Keiser, McDermott, Pearson, Rockefeller, Santos, Schindler, D. Schmidt and Schual-Berke.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

The State Board of Education (SBE) determines the rules for teacher certification. Since the 1980s teachers have been required to have endorsements in the subjects they plan to teach. Beginning September 1, 2000, candidates who are seeking initial or residency teacher certification must have a primary endorsement in a subject and must have completed an approved teacher preparation program. Primary endorsements in the broad areas of English/language arts, science, and social studies require a minimum of 60

quarter hours of college credit in those subjects. All other primary endorsements require a minimum of 45 quarter hours of college credit.

The SBE has also adopted a policy that impacts the teaching assignments of classroom teachers. Teachers who have a standard certificate, which is a certificate that was awarded before endorsements were required, may be assigned to any grade or subject covered by the certificates. As a rule, teachers who have certificates that include one or more endorsements may be assigned to teach only in the subjects and grades covered by their certificates and endorsements. However, under a variety of circumstances, the SBE permits school districts to assign those teachers to teach outside of their endorsed subjects.

School districts may assign effective– educators to teach in areas in which the teachers lack endorsements. These teachers are protected from being fired or placed on probation based on evaluations of their teaching effectiveness in the out-of-endorsement areas. If the teachers are so assigned, the district and affected teachers must develop a written plan of assistance for the teachers. The plan must include a reasonable amount of planning and study time in the out-of-endorsement area.

Each decision to assign a teacher to an out-of-endorsement area must be approved by a formal vote of the district’s school directors. In addition, the district must report to the SBE the number of teachers so assigned and the subject areas affected.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Higher Education Coordinating Board may reimburse a teacher who is teaching outside of his or her required endorsement area for classes that the teacher takes in subjects covered by the missing endorsement. The reimbursement is limited to the actual tuition and fees paid by the teacher for the classes, or the tuition and fees charged to resident undergraduate students at the University of Washington, whichever is lower. The board will provide the reimbursement only to the extent that funding is appropriated for that purpose.

School districts must submit information to the board to verify a teacher’s eligibility for the tuition reimbursement. The information will include verification that the teacher has been required to teach outside of the teacher’s required endorsement area; a list of the credits earned toward the new endorsement; and the amount that the teacher is eligible to receive for those credits.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The Higher Education Coordinating Board instead of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction will administer the reimbursements. The types of information that

school districts must submit to the board on behalf of eligible teachers are described.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: One of the strongest recommendations in most studies on educator excellence is that teachers have a thorough understanding of the subjects that they are required to teach. This depth of understanding is necessary to help students with different learning styles master unfamiliar material. According to a report by the Partnership for Excellence in Teaching, 51 percent of mathematics teachers nationally do not have a college major or minor that subject. Assigning classes to teachers who do not have appropriate subject matter endorsements is becoming increasingly common. It is a real issue for the principals of small schools and is a practice that may well hurt the state's efforts to help all students achieve high academic standards.

Testimony Against:

Testified: Representative Keiser, prime sponsor; Greg Williamson, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Larry Davis, State Board of Education; Karen Davis, Washington Education Association; and Rainer Houser, Washington Association of School Principals.