

Higher Education Committee

HB 1381

Brief Description: *Requiring institutions of higher education to use personal identifiers that are not social security numbers.*

Sponsors: *Representatives Mulliken, Rockefeller, G. Chandler, Skinner, Dunn, Lantz, Doumit, Cox, Keiser, Pearson, Schoesler, Ruderman, Schual-Berke and Lambert.*

Brief Summary of Bill

- *Prohibits institutions of higher education from using student's social security numbers as personal identifiers except for the purpose of financial aid, employment or as otherwise required by federal law.*

Hearing Date: *2/9/01*

Staff: *Tracey Taylor (786-7196).*

Background:

The crime of identity theft is an increasing threat to the credit and good name of the citizens of this state. This crime occurs when the information about the victim's identity, such as date of birth, social security number and driver's license, is stolen and used to establish credit and make purchases, leaving the victim accountable for defaults in payments and a ruined credit history.

According to the Washington State Attorney General's January 10, 2000, report from the consumer privacy workgroup, an estimated 500,000 people per year become a victim of identity theft. The Federal Trade Commission, in a 1999 report to Congress, indicated there were 1,153 investigations of social security misuse in 1997.

The Family Education and Privacy Rights Act of 1974 (20 USC ú1232g) protects the accuracy and confidentiality of student records. Any educational institution receiving federal funds is prohibited from permitting the release of education records or personally identifiable information contained in the records of students without the written consent of

the student's parents. However, this information can be released without written consent to other school officials, including teachers within the educational institution, who have a legitimate educational interest in the information.

Summary of Bill:

Institutions of higher education must not use students' social security numbers as personal identifiers, except for financial aid or employment purposes, or as otherwise required by state or federal law.

The institutions are charged with developing an alternative system of unique personal identifiers to be used for grading and other administrative purposes.

The higher education coordinating board, the state board for community and technical colleges and the institutions of higher education must submit a report to the Legislature by December 1, 2001, outlining each institution's new personal identifier system.

Appropriation: *None.*

Fiscal Note: *Available.*

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