

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1796

As Passed House:

March 18, 2003

Title: An act relating to funding driver's education for low-income students.

Brief Description: Funding driver's education for low-income students.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Murray, Hankins, Dunshee, Anderson, Lantz, Eickmeyer, McIntire, Kagi, Conway, Kenney, Schual-Berke, Wood, Lovick, Santos and Edwards).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/19/03, 2/27/03 [DPS];

Appropriations: 3/5/03, 3/8/03 [DP2S(w/o sub TR)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/18/03, 54-41.

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Provides funding for reduced-fee traffic safety education for low-income students through the assessment of a \$1 per plate fee assessed on the issuance of reflective license plates.
- Directs the board of directors of school districts to set a reduced fee for traffic safety education for low-income students.
- Allows districts that do not offer traffic safety courses to provide scholarships to low income students to attend private drivers' schools.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Murray, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Simpson, Vice Chair; Anderson, Bailey, Campbell, Clibborn, Cooper, Dickerson, Hatfield, Lovick, Morris, Romero, Shabro, Wallace, Wood and Woods.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Ericksen, Ranking Minority Member; Jarrett, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Kristiansen,

Mielke, Nixon and Schindler.

Staff: Jill Satran (786-7315).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Transportation. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Cody, Conway, Dunshee, Grant, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Linville, McIntire, Miloscia, Ruderman and Schual-Berke.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Sehlin, Ranking Minority Member; Pearson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Boldt, Buck, Clements, Cox, DeBolt, Hunter, McDonald, Pflug, Sump and Talcott.

Staff: Denise Graham (786-7137).

Background:

Traffic safety education is provided to students in most school districts throughout the state. Historically these programs have been funded through a mixture of funds provided by the state, the school district and individual students' families. Until recently, state funds have been available to support all such traffic safety education programs and an additional amount has been available specifically to reduce these fees for low-income students. During the 2001-2003 biennium, state funding for these programs was eliminated. As a result approximately 35 school districts have reported dropping their traffic safety program due to lack of funding. The Superintendent of Public Instruction determines the per-pupil reimbursement rate, and each school district offering an approved traffic safety education course is reimbursed up to the level set by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill:

This bill assesses an additional \$1 per plate fee on all reflective license plates issued at initial vehicle registration and on replacement. These fees are to be deposited in the motor vehicle fund and transferred at least quarterly to the public safety and education account to be used only for lowering the cost to low-income students of traffic safety education programs accredited by school districts, as determined by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The board of directors of each school district or combination of school districts, currently required to set the traffic safety education fee, are also required by this bill to set a reduced fee for low-income students.

Each school district that does not offer an approved traffic safety education program may offer scholarships to low-income students who enroll in a private traffic safety course.

A "low income student" is a student who qualifies to receive school lunches on a reduced-cost or free basis.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: This bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2003.

Testimony For: (Transportation) This bill would replace, in part, state funding for traffic safety education that has been lost over the last several years. Without this funding, some school districts have stopped providing traffic safety education and others may follow. Young adults who do not have access to school-based programs may not be able to afford commercial programs. As a result some of these individuals may decide to drive illegally or they may decide to wait until they are 18 to get their license without having had quality training (or perhaps any formal training at all). The fee imposed by this bill may need to be increased to provide more substantial assistance to these young adults.

Washington is known nationally for the quality of its traffic safety instruction. School-based traffic safety programs offered to students are more accessible to students both in terms of the time they are offered and their location at the school rather than several miles away. Graduates of these programs are better, and safer drivers.

Testimony For: (Appropriations) Reflective license plates must be replaced every seven years, so this bill will cost 28 cents per year. This is a good investment to help low income students receive traffic safety education. This is not a turf war with commercial schools; they have always supported subsidies for low income students. This will assist in maintaining safe roadways in Washington.

Testimony Against: (Transportation) None.

Testimony Against: (Appropriations) None.

Testified: (Transportation) (In support) Terry Hulin, Clover Park School District; Greg Williamson, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Allan Jones, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; John Robertson, Sharon Foster, and Debbie Cottonware, Washington Traffic Safety Education Association; Carol Taylor Cann, Washington Parent Teacher Association; Mary Kenfield; Jillian Russell, student; Astrik Price, student; Deborah Russell, student; and Alex Hansen.

Testified: (Appropriations) (In support) Sharon Foster, Washington Traffic Safety Education Association.

(Other) Alan Jones, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.