

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## 2SHB 1796

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Transportation

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

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

**Sponsors:** 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: 2/2/04, 2/4/04 [DP3S].

**Brief Summary of Third Substitute Bill**

- Provides funding for reduced-fee traffic safety education for low-income students through a \$1 fee assessment on all new and replacement reflective license plates issued.
- Allows school districts with no traffic safety ed-program to provide scholarships to low-income students to attend private traffic safety school.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Majority Report:** The third substitute bill be substituted therefor and the third substitute bill do pass. Signed by 21 members: Representatives Murray, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Simpson, G., Vice Chair; Armstrong, Campbell, Clibborn, Cooper, Dickerson, Edwards, Flannigan, Hankins, Hatfield, Hudgins, Lovick, Morris, Romero, Schindler, Shabro, Sullivan, Wallace and Wood.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Ericksen, Ranking Minority Member; Jarrett, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Kristiansen, Mielke, Nixon, Rodne and Woods.

**Staff:** Jill Satran (786-7315).

**Background:**

Traffic safety education is provided to students in 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.

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**Summary of Third 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.

**Third Substitute Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill:**

The effective date is changed from 2003 to 2004 and the emergency clause is eliminated.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Third Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except section 1, relating to a \$1 fee for each license plate issued, which takes effect November 1, 2004.

**Testimony For:** Traffic collisions are the number one killer of young people. Decreases in traffic safety education funding is leading to less-skilled drivers on the road and

eventually will lead to increased accidents and death.

Loss of funding has resulted in 70 school districts dropping traffic safety education programs. Parts of the state have limited access to such training programs, and even if they are available many low-income students cannot afford to take advantage of the training. Prior to the decrease in funds, over 90 percent of our young drivers enrolled in traffic safety education. As a result, Washington has 42 percent fewer fatalities (50 teen lives) than the rest of the nation due in large part to this state's outstanding traffic safety education program " the strongest program in the nation.

Some students work or have other family-related responsibilities that do not allow them to take traffic safety training during the times offered by their school. Low-income students should have the opportunity to take either a public or a private traffic safety education program.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Persons Testifying:** Allan Jones and Greg Williamson, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; Fianna Dickson, Miss Washington; and Gerald Apple, Washington Traffic Safety Education Association.

(In support with amendments) Dawn Vyvyan, Washington Professional Traffic Safety Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.