

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HCR 4415

As Reported by House Committee On:

Education

Brief Description: Establishing a committee to review basic education.

Sponsors: Representatives Anderson, Haigh, Tom, Santos and Talcott.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/4/04, 2/5/04 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates a joint select committee to review and make recommendations on the alignment of the basic education laws with its education reform efforts.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; McDermott, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Tom, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Cox, Haigh, Hunter, McMahan, Rockefeller and Santos.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

The State Constitution establishes the education of all children as the paramount duty of the state, and requires the Legislature to provide for a system of public schools. The Constitution is the foundation upon which three school funding decisions made in the 1970s and 1980s rested. Those decisions, coupled with subsequent state laws and court decisions, have helped shape the budget formulas used to determine the state support for the public education. In order to meet its paramount duty, the Legislature dedicates almost one-half of the state's general fund monies to support the education of children in the public schools.

The funding system begins with state-supervised school district budgeting, accounting, and financial reporting practices. State resources, supplemented by local and federal

monies, are distributed through funding formulas to equalize educational opportunities throughout the state. Basic education and categorical programs are state supported through these formulas. State resources include state general fund revenue, other state revenues, state property taxes, and timber excise taxes.

Every few years, the Legislature revisits various aspects of school funding. The 1998 Legislature directed the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee to study the financing system for the public schools. The study included a review of school district revenue and expenditure practices, resource allocations within selected districts, and available data sources. The study also addressed class size and personnel deployment issues. It was presented to the Legislature in 1999.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

A joint select committee of eight legislators is convened to review and make recommendations on the state's basic education laws. The committee will examine the definition of basic education to determine whether the current requirements align with and support the goals and requirements of the state's education reform laws and the federal "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001." The committee will recommend any changes necessary to align the state's definition of basic education to the state's education reform laws.

The committee will hold at least one publicized public hearing in each educational service district to accept public comment on the existing definition of basic education and on possible modifications to that definition.

The committee will be composed of four members of the House of Representatives, two from each major caucus, selected by the Speaker of the House, and four members of the Senate, two from each major caucus, selected by the President of the Senate. The committee may convene subcommittees.

The committee will receive staff support from legislative committee staff and will have its travel expenses reimbursed as provided in current law.

The committee will report its findings and recommendations to the Legislature by January 3, 2007. It will be dissolved by June 30, 2007.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Public hearings will be held in each educational service district rather than each legislative district, and a technical correction is made.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 29, 2004.

Testimony For: The state's definition of basic education was created over 25 years ago when the educational focus was on the amount of time students spent in school. Through education reform, that focus has shifted to the amount of education students actually receive while they are in school, however, the state's definition of basic education has never been adjusted to recognize that new focus. It is time that the legislature aligned its expectations of students with its definition of basic education. And, recognizing that the new definition may need to last another 25 years, it needs to craft that definition with great care. During the process, it needs to consult parents and community members throughout the state so that a new definition reflects the expectations that those parents and citizens have for the education of their children. Once the state has created a definition that has broad community support, it can request new money from the voters to fund that definition, if that money is necessary.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Anderson, prime sponsor; Megan Atkinson, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Gary King, Washington Education Association; and Rainer Houser, Association of Washington State Principals.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.