

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1796

As Reported by House Committee On:

Transportation
Appropriations

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

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

Sponsors: 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)].

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 Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to allocate the revenues collected under this bill to school districts for traffic safety education for low-income students.
- 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).

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.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

This bill assesses an additional \$1 per plate fee on all reflective license plates issued at initial vehicle registration and on replacement. The Department of Licensing may retain no more than 2 percent of the fees collected for administrative purposes. The revenues generated from this fee are to be used only for lowering the cost to low-income students of traffic safety education programs accredited by school districts. The Superintendent of Public Instruction must determine the per-pupil reimbursement rate, and is allowed to deduct no more than 5 percent of the fees collected under this bill to cover the administrative costs associated with allocating these funds.

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.

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

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill increases the existing fees for the purchase of reflective license plates by \$1 per plate, rather than imposing a fee of \$1 per transaction at both initial vehicle registration and when replacing vehicle licenses as provided in the original bill. This change results in increased revenues and lower implementation costs. The Department of Licensing is allowed to retain no more than 2 percent of the fees collected for administrative purposes.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: 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 Against: None.

Testified: (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.

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).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Transportation:

The second substitute provides for scholarships for low income students to attend private drivers' schools in school districts that do not offer traffic safety courses; the substitute did not. The second substitute does not allow the Department of Licensing and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to deduct a portion of the fee revenues for administrative expenses; the substitute did.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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

Testimony For: 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: None.

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

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