

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5304

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, March 3, 2003

Title: An act relating to higher education in high-demand fields and programs.

Brief Description: Creating a program to increase undergraduate enrollment in high-demand fields and programs.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Carlson, Brown, Horn, Rossi, B. Sheldon, Mulliken, Schmidt, Johnson, Shin and Franklin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/20/03, 3/3/03 [DPS-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5304 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Carlson, Chair; Schmidt, Vice Chair; Horn, Kohl-Welles, Mulliken, B. Sheldon and Shin.

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

Background: In 1999, the state chose to expand career-oriented high-demand programs at baccalaureate, as well as two-year institutions by providing a \$4.7 million high-demand enrollment pool to be administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB). The pool of funds and 550 full-time undergraduate enrollment slots were allocated in response to competitive proposals for the public two-year and four-year colleges and universities.

The high-demand enrollment pool was not continued in the 2001-03 biennium. Instead, the public higher education institutions were directed to report each year about their efforts to create more enrollment opportunities in high-demand fields. It is believed by some that reporting may not be enough.

Legislative discussions, the reports of the colleges and universities, and the HECB's experience with the high demand enrollment pool have revealed a number of statewide issues that will affect the state's long-term ability to increase targeted opportunities for students in high demand fields: high demand programs are often expensive; reallocations are an important, but limited source of high-demand funds; colleges face conflicting pressures and expectations; partnerships are critical to the state's long-term ability to respond to high-demand program needs.

Summary of Substitute Bill: A program is created and is administered, subject to appropriation, by the Higher Education Coordinating Board which contracts for undergraduate and graduate placements in high-demand fields. Partnerships with certain border-county or

private nonprofit institutions are encouraged with the requirement that the public Washington institution be the fiscal agent, grant-recipient-of-record, and an active instructional partner.

The HECB, with an advisory committee, looks at the present and near-term outlook for in-state employment of graduating students and considers proposals that (1) create opportunities for under-represented students in the field of study, (2) respond to unique regional economic opportunities and promote economic growth in depressed regions of the state, (3) address shortages in the health and education professions, (4) spread the benefits of the high-technology economy geographically, (5) provide employment in a business or economic sector with significant growth potential supported by data, and (6) include an articulation agreement to ease the transfer of applicable, lower division credit earned by participating Washington students. Priority is given to proposals that foster collaboration across educational sectors.

Reports on the impact of the program are delivered to the Governor and the Legislature by December 1 of each even-numbered year.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The advisory committee membership is clarified so that those making recommendations are not potential program participants. Priority is for cross-sector educational collaborative proposals. The Oregon border counties that may participate are defined.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The Legislature must first fully fund the core enrollments prior to meeting high demand needs. The PSSB is the preferred vehicle and the HECB sees this as a vote of confidence. What constitutes high demand in one community is not necessarily so in another community. Private colleges must be included as full partners; in fact, privates should be allowed to be fiscal agents. Privates have significant enrollment capacity. Cross-sector collaboration should be developed.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Jeanne Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor; Bruce Botka, HECB; Violet Boyer, WAICU; Ann Anderson, CWU.