

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6052

As Passed Senate, April 14, 2003

Title: An act relating to alternative route teacher certification.

Brief Description: Changing alternative route teacher certification provisions.

Sponsors: Senators Johnson and Rossi; by request of Office of Financial Management.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 4/1/03, 4/2/03 [DP].

Passed Senate: 4/14/03, 47-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Johnson, Chair; Zarelli, Vice Chair; Carlson, Eide, Finkbeiner, McAuliffe, Rasmussen and Schmidt.

Staff: Heather Lewis-Lechner (786-7448)

Background: In 2001, the Legislature created a statewide Partnership Grant program and the Alternative Route Conditional Scholarship program to support three alternative routes for teacher certification. Each route focuses on increasing the number of teachers in shortage and high need areas due to subject matter or geographic location. Routes one and two are available to individuals currently employed by a school district. Route three certification is available to people who are not employed by the school district but who have a bachelor's degree.

Funds, to the extent appropriated, are provided through the Partnership Grant program to participating districts that apply. Funds are to be used to assist the school district in partnering with higher education teacher preparation programs. The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), with support from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) selects the districts that shall receive the funds and a list of factors to be considered is included in statute. The majority of the education for individuals participating in the program is intended to take place in a K-12 classroom under the direction of a mentor teacher, with higher education helping to fill in the gaps. Both the participants and the mentor teacher are eligible to receive a stipend paid for from the Partnership Grant program funds. Participants that are in the program for a full year are eligible for a stipend of at least 80 percent of a beginning teacher's salary (about \$22,600).

The Conditional Scholarship program is administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) and is subject to the availability of funds appropriated for this specific purpose. Participation in the Conditional Scholarship program is limited to route one and route two participants and selection is made by the PESB. The total scholarship amount available to each recipient annually is \$4,000.

Summary of Bill: To the extent funds are appropriated, districts may apply for program funds through the Partnership Grant program for stipends for mentors only. The mentor's stipend amount is limited to \$500 per intern under the direction of the mentor. The list of factors the PESB and OSPI are to use in considering which district proposals to approve for partnership grants is clarified to be non-exclusive.

Conditional scholarships are made available to all program participants, including route three, and the total scholarship amount available is increased to \$8,000. PESB is no longer required to select who receives the scholarship.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The alternative certification program is making a difference. We have had very positive results with the program and have learned a lot. This bill will allow us to continue to improve the program and actually expand the program while also saving the state money. We have learned that we can operate this program with less funding. When the stipend amount was capped at a lower level, the level of demand continued and interest did not falter. Districts have been creative in how they implement the program and have allowed paraeducators to continue their employment while participating in the program. This bill will allow us to serve twice the number of participants with the same funding. This program also meets the interests of the new federal ESEA.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Greg Williamson, OSPI; Jennifer Wallace, PESB; Judy Hartmann, Governor's Office.

House Amendment(s): The original language requiring the PESB to select who receives the conditional scholarship is added back in.