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## Higher Education Committee

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### HB 1965

**Brief Description:** Providing tuition waivers for teachers seeking additional education.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Ericks, Strow, Haler, Linville, O'Brien, Santos and Chase.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a mandatory tuition waiver for teachers seeking a professional certificate or a master's degree at a public four-year institution of higher education.
- Creates a service obligation for waiver recipients of at least five years teaching in a public school.
- Directs the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) to adopt rules for implementation of the tuition waiver program.

**Hearing Date:** 2/22/05

**Staff:** Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

#### Background:

The State Board of Education (SBE) is charged with approving teacher preparation and certification programs offered at Washington's institutions of higher education. In 1997, the SBE revised the teacher certification rules to require the earning of a professional certificate. Under the professional certificate program, teachers first earn a residency certificate that is valid for five years. Teachers then begin the process of earning a professional certificate that is renewed every five years through completion of an individualized professional growth plan.

The professional certificate program is intended to be a performance-based system of teacher preparation and certification. Teachers are asked to demonstrate competency in specific knowledge and skill areas deemed to have a positive impact on student learning. For teachers holding a residency certificate, the five-year process sequence to earn a professional certificate includes: completion of the first year of teaching; application to an approved program; completion of a pre-assessment seminar; completion of core credits; and completion of the culminating seminar. The professional certification programs offered at the various institutions of higher education may differ in seminar content, credit designations, timelines, core structure, and cost. Some institutions offer professional certification only as part of a master's degree program, while others offer professional certification separate from a master's program, or professional

certification only. A minimum of 15 college credits is required in any professional certification program, although an approved program could include more than 15 credits at a particular institution.

The K-12 salary allocation model for teachers reflects pay increases for the earning of post-baccalaureate credits at the 15, 30, 45, and 90 credit steps, as well as the earning of a master's degree; a master's plus 45 credits; a master's plus 90 credits; and a master's with a doctorate degree. The salary allocation model currently does not include specific recognition of a professional certificate.

**Summary of Bill:**

Public institutions of higher education are required to waive tuition for a teacher who has a contract to teach in a public school and who is seeking a professional certificate or a master's degree. An institution is not required to waive more than the number of credits necessary to earn the certificate or the degree. A teacher who receives a tuition waiver incurs a repayment obligation, unless the teacher continues to teach at a Washington public school for at least five years after earning the certificate or degree. Twenty percent of the repayment obligation is satisfied for each year of public school teaching. The repayment obligation is forgiven for a teacher who dies or becomes totally disabled before meeting the repayment obligation.

The HECB is directed to adopt rules and to work with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to identify teachers eligible for a waiver. The HECB also will collect and manage repayments from teachers who do not meet their teaching service obligations.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 14, 2005.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.