

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6420

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Labor, Commerce, Research & Development, January 31, 2006

Title: An act relating to community and technical college part-time academic employee health care benefits.

Brief Description: Regarding community and technical college part-time academic employee health benefits.

Sponsors: Senators Pridemore, Schmidt, Kohl-Welles, Fairley, McAuliffe and Shin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce, Research & Development: 1/16/06, 1/31/06 [DPS-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6420 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Kohl-Welles, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Brown, Keiser and Prentice.

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7483)

Background: Part-time faculty must work half of a full-time work load for two consecutive quarters to qualify for health care benefits.

Historically, the summer quarter was included in determining a part-time faculty member's continued eligibility for health care benefits though many part-time faculty do not work or work reduced loads during the summer quarter.

In 1998, two part-time faculty members sued the State (*Mader v. HCA*, No. 98-2-30850-8 SEA) regarding this matter which led to a settlement in 2004. As a result of the *Mader* settlement, part-time faculty are now entitled to health care benefits during the summer quarter, regardless of their summer workload, provided they work at least half-time during the academic year which includes the fall, winter and spring quarters.

Summary of Substitute Bill: This bill establishes a method for determining long-term part-time academic employees' eligibility for health care benefits, without altering the continued eligibility of those who continue to maintain a workload of half time or more each quarter.

If an employee averages a 50 percent or more of a full-time workload during the academic year (Fall through Spring quarters), then the employee is eligible for continuous health benefits, irrespective of the employee's workload during the summer quarter. If an employee

averages less than 50 percent of a full-time workload in an academic year, employer contribution health care benefits cease.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill averaged two years of an academic employee's workload in order to determine continuous eligibility for employer contributed health care benefits during the summer quarter. The original bill did not contain an emergency clause.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Immediately.

Testimony For (Original bill): This bill addresses of the inequities between part-time and full-time faculty. The establishment for health care benefits for part-time faculty stems from the best practices task force. The Health Care Authority has had over 2 years to look at this issue and given that nothing has happened, an emergency clause should be added so current part-time faculty would be eligible for health care benefits this summer. Establishing a workload pattern would provide some security to part-time faculty members who are concerned whether they will have health care benefits on a quarter to quarter basis, when their workload unexpectedly drops.

Testimony Against: None.

Testimony Other (Original Bill): The Legislature and Health Care Authority set the policies for the Health Care Board, which leads to concerns as to how health care benefits for part-time faculty would be administered, not to mention the costs since this would be manually tracked.

This bill creates eligibility criteria for a specific class of employees, which already exist in statute. No other state averages quarters to establish health benefits eligibility for part-time faculty. If this bill is adopted there is a some concern how this would impact other part-time employees who are not eligible for health care benefits.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Pridemore, prime sponsor; Doug Collins, WA Part-Time Faculty Association; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Association of Faculty Teachers (AFT)-WA; Sonia Begert, Olympic College; and Louis Watanbe, Bellevue Community College.

OTHER: Terry Knudsen, WA Part-Time Faculty Associated; and Dennis Martin, Health Care Authority; John Boesenberg, State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC).