

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1050

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to allowing certain students with disabilities to participate in graduation ceremonies.

Brief Description: Allowing certain students with disabilities to participate in graduation ceremonies.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Upthegrove, Quall, Kagi, Pedersen, Morrell, Kenney, P. Sullivan, Jarrett, Simpson, Wallace, Cody, McDermott, Linville, Moeller, Morris, Springer, Wood, Santos, Schual-Berke, Williams, Ormsby and Hasegawa).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/23/07, 2/23/07 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/8/07, 96-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/2/07, 44-0.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Allows a student receiving special education services to participate in high school commencement exercises if the student has attended four years of high school and has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that prescribes continued special education or related services beyond the fourth year of high school.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Barlow, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haigh, McDermott, Roach, Santos and P. Sullivan.

Staff: Sarah Ream (786-7303).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Background:

The State Board of Education (SBE) determines the minimum state high school graduation requirements. School districts may adopt additional graduation requirements.

Students are generally assigned an expected graduation year based on the year they begin ninth grade. However, students receiving special education services are assigned an expected year of graduation in the year they turn 16 based on the students' Individualized Education Program (IEP).

School districts must adopt written policies and procedures for meeting the unique needs of students receiving special education services. These procedures must allow special education students to remain in school until the student graduates or reaches age 21. As a result, a student's IEP may provide for the student to continue in high school beyond the student's fourth year.

Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill:

Students receiving special education services who have IEPs providing for special education or related services beyond the fourth year of high school, and who have attended four years of high school, shall be allowed to participate in commencement exercises with their graduating class.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S):

By July 1, 2007, school districts are required to establish policies and procedures permitting students with disabilities to participate in graduation ceremonies with their peers. Students who participate in graduation receive a certificate of attendance. An emergency clause is added.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Participating in high school graduation ceremonies is an important milestone in a student's life and is important to the student's family. Parents are often heartbroken and incredulous when they learn their child may not be able to walk with his or her peers. Districts are better at integrating special education students into the school, so students view themselves as part of their peer group. Walking with the students' class is very important socially for students receiving special education services and helps them feel accepted.

Transition services should continue to be available to eligible students receiving special education services even if they participate in the graduation ceremonies. This bill does not change the graduation requirements, but simply allows eligible students to participate in graduation ceremonies.

(Opposed) Districts should continue to have local control over the requirements students must meet to participate in graduation ceremonies. In a survey of principals, 95 percent support requiring achievement of all graduation requirements before a student is allowed to walk in the graduation ceremony. Walking is not just a social event, but a sign of achievement.

Persons Testifying: Representative Uptegrove, prime sponsor; Emily J. Rogers, Arc of Washington; Kenneth R. Larson, People First of Washington and Sail Coalition; Kimmen Gorden, People first of Washington; Diana Stadden, Pierce County Coalition for Developmental Disability; Stacy Gillett, Dussanet Law Group; Kevin, Kathy, and Howard Britt; Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition; and Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principals.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.