

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5731

As Passed House - Amended:

April 11, 2007

Title: An act relating to educating students in high demand fields.

Brief Description: Creating a committee on the education of students in high demand fields.

Sponsors: By Senate Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Shin, Delvin, Berkey, Sheldon, Tom, Oemig, Rasmussen, Pridemore, Roach, Jacobsen and Kohl-Welles).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 3/28/07, 3/29/07 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 4/11/07, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill (As Amended by House)

- Establishes a committee focused on the education of students in high demand fields.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Wallace, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Anderson, Ranking Minority Member; Buri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hasegawa, Jarrett, McIntire, Roberts and Sommers.

Staff: Jennifer Thornton (786-7111).

Background:

Nationally, the State of Washington ranks 36th in the production of Bachelors Degrees, 38th in the production of Bachelors Degrees in science and engineering, and 42nd in the number of science and engineering graduate students in proportion to the state's population of 18-24 year olds.

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.

Beginning in 2007, it is estimated that for job openings in Washington that require a Bachelor's Degree, 47 percent will be in fields identified as high demand or high impact, but only 14 percent of Washington students each year graduate with degrees in one of these fields. In the 2005-06 academic year, the most baccalaureate degrees awarded were in Business Management (16 percent), Social Sciences (14 percent), and Liberal and General Studies (7 percent).

By 2005, over 30 percent of Washington adults had earned a Bachelor's Degree or higher and Washington ranked 10th among the states. The Washington economy has usually outperformed the U.S. economy and provided relatively high-wage job opportunities, attracting large numbers of well-educated migrants to the state.

Relative to demand, Washington does not produce a sufficient number of newly prepared workers at the mid-level -- areas that require more than one year but less than four years of higher education. The in-state supply at the mid-level is sufficient to fill only 83 percent of employer job openings that require that level of education and training.

Summary of Amended Bill:

A committee focused on the education of students in high demand fields is established to:

- develop a plan to increase the number of baccalaureate degrees granted by Washington institutions of higher education by 10,000 per year and significantly increase the number of certificates and Associate Degrees granted by 2020 with a special emphasis directed towards high impact, high demand areas of study;
- develop a marketing project to inform students, parents, and educators of opportunities in high demand fields;
- investigate ways to motivate high school and college students to take more math and science courses; and
- identify ways to enhance partnerships between the business community and institutions of higher education to produce graduates in high demand fields.

The committee will be co-chaired by a member of the House of Representatives and a member of the Senate, and consists of two members of the House of Representatives, two members of the Senate, and one representative of each of the following: the Higher Education Coordinating Board; the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; the Labor Council; the Council of Presidents; the Prosperity Partnership; the Council of Faculty Representatives; the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; an employer of persons in high demand fields; and a graduate student member of the Washington Student Lobby. Staff and logistical support to the committee will be provided by the Senate Committee Services and the Office of Program Research. The committee will report its findings to the Legislature by December 1, 2007.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Washington is a top employer of people with Bachelor's Degrees, and the number one employer of engineers. It ranks 36th in conferring Bachelor's Degrees and 38th in conferring degrees in science and engineering. Forty-eight percent of jobs will be in fields where only 14 percent of the degrees are being conferred. This bill outlines the goals of additional degrees and a public awareness campaign.

It is important to look at areas of high demand to ensure that Washington's citizens can be a part of the economy. The committee created through this bill would move things forward in a coordinated manner. Faculty appreciate being part of the committee.

Workforce education should also be included in the bill. It would make sense that the marketing program would include not only fields that require baccalaureate degrees but also related fields that require certificates and Associate Degrees.

(In support with concerns) High demand also exists in programs offered by community and technical colleges, private career schools and apprenticeship training programs. Over 20,000 employers are having difficulty finding people with a vocational certificate or vocational Associates Degree. High demand fields at all levels should be included in the bill, and the WTECB should be represented on the committee.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Shin, prime sponsor; Bob Drewel, Puget Sound Regional Council and Prosperity Partnership; David Lovell, University of Washington and Council of Faculty Representatives; John Lederer, Higher Education Coordinating Board; and Loretta Seppanen, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

(In support with concerns) Bryan Wilson, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.