

SENATE BILL REPORT

E2SHB 2082

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 21, 2008

Title: An act relating to establishing the field of dreams program.

Brief Description: Establishing the field of dreams program.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Chandler, Wallace, Grant, Buri, Miloscia, Kretz and Newhouse).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/12/07, 96-2.

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 3/22/07, 3/26/07 [DP-WM]; 2/20/08, 2/21/08 [DPA-WM].

Ways & Means: 4/02/07.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Shin, Chair; Kilmer, Vice Chair; Delvin, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey and Schoesler.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Tim Yowell (786-7435)

Background: Washington's Advanced College Tuition Payment Program – known as the Guaranteed Education Tuition (GET) Program - was created in 1998. The GET Program allows purchasers to buy tuition units at current prices for use at a later date. The purchaser is guaranteed that one year's worth of units purchased now will be worth one year's worth of public university tuition in the future. One hundred GET units are equal to one year of resident undergraduate tuition and state-mandated fees at the most expensive public university in Washington.

The seasonally adjusted Washington State labor force grew from 3,008,485 to 3,321,257 from December 1997 to December 2005, a growth rate of 10.4 percent. In contrast, on a seasonally unadjusted basis, the Washington State agricultural labor force is estimated as growing about 2.7 percent, from 86,327 to 88,842. Over this same time period, the year-by-year average monthly seasonal employment fell from 37,474 workers to 29,842 workers, a drop of 20.4

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.

percent. Average hourly wage rates for those who work exclusively in agriculture have fallen in constant dollar terms over the past five years from \$10.04 in 2001 to \$9.88 in 2005.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Amendments): The Field of Dreams program is established to provide college tuition in the form of GET units to students working for agricultural employers. To be eligible for the program, participants must: be resident students; be 16 through 21 years old; and be enrolled in high school, have graduated from high school, or hold a General Equivalency Diploma. To enroll in the Field of Dreams program, the student must register at WorkSource and work for a qualified employer in an agricultural job. For each 350 hours worked for a qualified employer, a student earns 10 GET units. Students may earn a maximum of 100 GET units. Students obtain a certificate verifying units earned from the WorkSource office, and may use them at any accredited institution of higher education. The Employment Security Department, through WorkSource provides information to potential students on the program, outreach, manage student enrollment, and tracks student hours worked for qualified employers. The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) administers the Field of Dreams program and purchases and GET units for the purpose of Field of Dreams awards. The HECB distributes award funds, in the form of GET units, to institutions of higher education on behalf of eligible recipients beginning July 1, 2010. The HECB provides annual reports to the Legislature on the use of GET units, enrollment, and graduation information of GET Field of Dreams recipients. The HECB, with the Employment Security Department, submits reports to the Legislature by December 1 of 2010, 2012, and 2014. The program expires on December 31, 2013.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Amendments): The language of the bill is updated to reflect statutory changes made during the 2007 legislative session and update the section expiration dates.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. The bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Engrossed Second Substitute Bill : PRO: This was a good idea last year and it's still a good idea today. It is important in rural communities where students' employment opportunities are primarily agricultural. This would allow students to become more personally involved in their own future. It is not a give-away; students would earn their GET credits. This will also help farmers recruit local seasonal workers.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Chandler, prime sponsor; Dan Fazio, Washington Farm Bureau.