

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2684

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to establishing opportunity centers at community colleges.

Brief Description: Establishing opportunity centers at community colleges.

Sponsors: Representatives Kenney, Sullivan, Liias, Hasegawa, Simpson, Nelson, Goodman and Chase.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/20/10, 1/27/10 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates an Opportunity Employment and Education Center (Center) within the Seattle Community College district required to co-house and integrate various education, employment, and social service programs.
- Establishes a workgroup that is charged with developing policies and procedures to govern the Center.
- Stipulates the types of programs and services that the Center will offer.
- Requires the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to evaluate the Center and report to the Governor and Legislature by December 1, 2011, and annually thereafter.
- Requires the SBCTC to make recommendations on the location of an additional Center by December 1, 2010.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass.
Signed by 6 members: Representatives Wallace, Chair; Anderson, Ranking Minority Member; Carlyle, Driscoll, Hasegawa and White.

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.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Schmick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Angel and Haler.

Staff: Andi Smith (786-7304).

Background:

The Legislature's Capital Budget of 2003 called for "the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to conduct a study, with input from an advisory committee, on the feasibility and benefits of establishing one-stop satellite offices co-locating the Employment Security Department (ESD) and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) on community college campuses."

The Legislature's intent was to improve service delivery to shared clients/students of the two-year colleges, the DSHS, and the ESD; to improve employment outcomes for people struggling to achieve self-sufficiency and prosperity for their families; and to make better use of tax dollars by locating these services in facilities owned by the state rather than in leased buildings.

The SBCTC formed an advisory committee that included representatives from the ESD, the DSHS, and the Workforce Development Councils (WDC) and worked throughout 2004 to conduct focus groups and interviews with various stakeholder groups. The advisory committee recommended moving forward with a pilot at North Seattle Community College. Based on their study, the advisory group indicated that this co-location model had the potential to use state resources more effectively and to enhance service delivery through the integration of services needed by working-age adults.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

An Opportunity Education and Employment Center (Center) is established within the Seattle Community College district. The Center will house various educational and social service providers that will integrate access to employment, counseling, and public benefit programs as well as education, training, financial aid, and counseling offered through community colleges. The Center is required to form partnerships that will enhance service provision.

The Center is required to provide the following services: ESD and WDC WorkSource services; job listing, referral, and placement; job coaching; employment counseling, testing, and career planning; Unemployment Insurance claim filing assistance; cash grant programs run by the DSHS; the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; housing assistance; child support assistance; child care subsidies; WorkFirst and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families; state General Assistance and Supplemental Security Income facilitation; Vocational Rehabilitation services and referrals; Medicaid and medical services; alcoholism and drug addiction treatment and support act referrals; case management and mental health referrals; community college financial aid; support services; college counseling services related to career pathways and basic-skills resources for English language learners; high school completion; and adult basic education.

The Center is additionally responsible for jointly developing evaluation criteria with the SBCTC. By December 1, 2011, and annually thereafter, the SBCTC must provide an evaluation of existing Centers based on these criteria. The report must also include data on any federal and state legislative barriers to integration.

The Chancellor of the Seattle Community College district must convene a workgroup (Workgroup) that is charged with governing the Center. The Workgroup must include representatives of the King County WDC, North Seattle Community College, the ESD, and the DSHS. Each year a chair will be chosen from among the Workgroup's membership, with the chairmanship rotating among participating agencies.

The Workgroup is tasked with determining protocols and policies for service delivery and general operation, developing cross-agency training for agency employees located at the Center, and developing a plan to establish a common information-technology framework that could facilitate interagency access to files and information, including any common application and screening systems that facilitate access. The plan developed by the Workgroup must be accomplished within existing resources and to the extent federal privacy laws allow.

In addition, the Workgroup must also develop a release of information form that may be voluntarily completed by Center clients to facilitate information sharing and compliance with all applicable state and federal laws.

Agencies are required to apply for any applicable waivers of federal and state law to facilitate the intended goals of the Center.

By December 1, 2010, the SBCTC must make recommendations on the location of a new Center. If future Centers are created, they will be governed by the Workgroup.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The requirement for the Workgroup to develop a common information system for facilitating information sharing is removed and replaced with a requirement to develop a plan to establish such a system.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 12, 2010.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The bill recognizes the excellent work of the existing Opportunity Center (Center) at North Seattle Community College by placing it into state statute. The Center was put together through a labor of love and the work of many people - it started over 10 years and grew. The co-location provides a multitude of benefits for Washington residents and our business community including better client access through improved seamlessness, an introduction to higher education, and increased cost sharing and efficiencies. It also provides the business community with a better and more qualified applicant pool. A lot of people have worked on this Center, it is a strong Center, and it has already received national attention.

We are excited about the realization of the Center, which takes the services of the DSHS and the ESD and puts them all on the community college campus - only four states have successful partial models on co-location and we are really breaking new ground. A significant review of co-location took place several years ago. It found that the programs each have complex rules, Centers could lack sufficient funding, and may also have some problems with getting a solid governance structure in place. There have also been concerns about program silos and competing programmatic goals. While there are things to be considered, it is difficult to see why agencies could not work together to harmonize program goals and this bill will go a long way in pushing them to do so. It will be important to find collaborative performance measures to define what the state gains by putting these services together. We can deliver strategies that go beyond simple co-location. The SBCTC requests that they are added to the state workgroup.

Over two years ago, WorkSource co-located on the North Seattle Community College campus on an experimental basis and has proven invaluable. Being located on the campus provides current and constant information about degree and certificate offerings that create career pathways. We are excited to provide career pathways to our shared customers. Instead of having to drive to multiple locations, customers can access everything under one roof. In envisioning how services would be delivered, a King County Metro bus would stop right in front of the college, staff would be cross-trained in all programs, and customers would be given job referrals, information on career pathways, and funding opportunities for schooling. For people who are newly unemployed, services are not currently well coordinated, but by having a one-stop shop, the agencies are forming a better system.

The one-stop Center advances the strategies laid out in the High Skills, High Wages plan, especially objective four, regarding the integration of services for more effective customer service. The plan specifically mentions the steps that need to be taken that match with the provisions of this bill, like co-enrollment and cross-training of staff. This bill is the culmination of a lot of advocacy that low-income groups have done over the years. There are a number of studies that show that the path out of poverty includes upgrading their skills, that low-income people are intimidated by institutions of higher education and that, for low-income people to succeed, they need wraparound services. This bill does all three things.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Kenney, prime sponsor; Tina Bloomer, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Steve Miller and Bruce Beauchamp,

North Seattle Community College; Maddy Thompson, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; and Tony Lee, Solid Ground.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.