

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5078

As of February 16, 2009

Title: An act relating to higher education tuition and fees.

Brief Description: Authorizing the University of Washington to set building fees.

Sponsors: Senator Jacobsen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/30/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: Tuition fees consist of building fees and operating fees. Building fees are used to construct, equip, and maintain campus buildings. The building fee at each institution for each academic year is a percentage of total tuition fees calculated by the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB).

Summary of Bill: The University of Washington is authorized to establish its own building fee. The fee is determined annually. The HECB continues to calculate the building fee for all of the other public institutions of higher education.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

[OFM requested ten-year cost projection pursuant to I-960.]

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Tuition setting authority should rest with each individual university; this would act as a pilot for individual tuition setting authority. This would give the University of Washington (UW) the flexibility and tools required to respond to these economic times. The UW has five capital projects ready to start, but the Governor's

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budget only funds two. All six public four-year institutions should be included. At The Evergreen State College, students have raised their own fees to supplement efforts to help make buildings greener. The preferred approach would be for the state to fully fund capital projects.

CON: This is really unrestrained and unchecked authority to raise fees. For the students, this reduces predictability, accountability, and transparency. Some financial aid sources do not include fees. The state will have less incentive to fully fund capital projects. The Legislature is the proper forum for determining university fee increases.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Jacobsen, prime sponsor; Randy Hodgins, UW; Larry Ganders, Washington State University; Julie Suchanek, The Evergreen State College.

CON: David Iseminger, UW Graduate and Professional Student Senate; Morgan Holmgren, Association Students of Western Washington University.