

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5449

As of February 10, 2009

Title: An act relating to a statewide effort to establish and meet graduation and reengagement goals.

Brief Description: Regarding establishing and meeting graduation and reengagement goals.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Hobbs, McDermott, Oemig, Jarrett and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/09/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: Under current law, the State Board of Education (SBE) may establish school and school district goals addressing high school graduation rates and dropout reduction goals for students in seventh through twelfth grade. Under SBE's rule, each high school must reach a graduation rate goal of 70 percent in 2009. This rate must increase by three percentage points each year through 2013. In 2014 the graduation rate must be 85 percent.

In 2007 the Legislature directed the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to create a grant program to begin the phase-in of a statewide comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval system, as well as a state-level work group to assist and enhance the work of the grantees. In December 2008 the work group recommended to the Legislature that the state should set statutory goals and targets for (1) the percentage of students that will graduate from high school, and (2) the percentage of youth who have dropped out but will reengage in education.

Additionally, under the new federal regulations, a state must set a single graduation rate goal that all high schools must meet and annual graduation rate targets that reflect continuous and substantial improvement from the prior year toward meeting or exceeding the graduation rate goal. Beginning with the 2009-10 school year, any high school and the state must meet or exceed either the graduation rate goal or the state's targets for continuous and substantial improvement from the prior year.

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.

Summary of Bill: It is a goal of the state that by 2020, 95 percent of students must graduate from high school in four years, and 60 percent of youth who have dropped out of school must be reengaged in education and be college and work ready. SBE must establish annual graduation rate targets for school and school districts in order to meet the graduation and reengagement goals for 2020. SBE, in consultation with OSPI and the Building Bridges Advisory Committee, must also make recommendations to the Legislature on a focused assistance program and incentives for school districts to improve their high school graduation rate.

The Building Bridges Work Group will become the "Building Bridges Advisory Committee." The director of each of the following entities must appoint a representative to the Advisory Committee: OSPI; the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; the Employment Security Department; the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development; the Department of Health; the Department of Social and Health Services; and the Family Policy Council. All eight entities are directed to collaborate with other state agencies and organizations to meet state graduation rate goals and help reduce the dropout rate.

The Advisory Committee's recommendations to the Legislature must address flexible funding, common program eligibility criteria, common objectives and strategies, alignment of critical program resources, common assessment criteria or tools, and connections between education and social service programs at the local level.

The eight entities with an appointed representative on the Advisory Committee must, within existing resources: (1) develop programmatic objectives and measures to help meet the state dropout goals; and (2) explore opportunities for collaborative action to help reduce the state dropout program, including developing protocols and templates for sharing records and data and providing professional development. The Workforce Board must provide advice to the Advisory Committee on how best to reengage older youth who have dropped out of school and help them become college and work ready.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 21, 2009.

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: Dropout issues need to be a priority for the Legislature across all state agencies. School districts need focused assistance to help reach the graduation rate goals.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Wes Pruitt, Workforce Board.