

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5196

As of February 9, 2011

Title: An act relating to the operation of student transportation programs.

Brief Description: Authorizing school districts to charge for extra mileage costs for certain students attending schools outside their attendance areas.

Sponsors: Senators Hatfield, Swecker, Hargrove and Haugen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/03/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: Currently, under Washington law, each school district's board of directors must determine which individual students must be transported and what routes are most efficient. A school district is authorized to provide for the transportation of students enrolled in a school in the district, whether or not the student resides within the boundaries of the district. Students are eligible for transportation if their route stop is more than one radius mile from their school or if they are disabled and not ambulatory, or not capable of protecting their own welfare while traveling to or from school where the special education services are provided.

Each school district in Washington must have a policy allowing intradistrict enrollment as well as standards on how the intradistrict enrollment options are implemented.

Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, all schools and school districts must ensure that all students are making adequate yearly progress (AYP) such that all students will meet the state standards on the state assessments by 2014. Schools and school districts receiving Title I dollars but not achieving AYP will be identified for improvement or corrective actions, including offering students the option to transfer with transportation provided.

Summary of Bill: A school district is authorized to provide for the transportation of students. However, if a student attends a school outside his or her attendance area, as designated by the school district, the school district must charge the student an amount

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sufficient to reimburse the district for any extra mileage traveled, except where transportation is required to meet the following:

- if the student to be transported is a child with a disability traveling to or from the school where special education services are provided; or
- where federal law applies.

Each school district's policy on intradistrict enrollment options must include that the district may permit students enrolled in a school outside their attendance area to ride a school bus or other transportation vehicle to and from school and that the district must charge each student an amount sufficient to reimburse the district for any extra mileage traveled, except where transportation is required to meet the following:

- if the student to be transported is a child with a disability traveling to or from the school where special education services are provided; or
- where federal law applies.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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: We need to get conversation started on this issue to capture savings. Districts drive full-size buses a long way in the county. Three districts send buses to the same neighborhood every day. We're burning diesel and spending money that doesn't need to be spent.

CON: Charging transportation will result in a lack of access. Should there be a provision for low-income students? This will be a challenge for school business officers who will have to do a collection on a monthly basis. Cooperative programs in the state would have to force students to be charged in their home district. Change the bill to make the charge optional. We are concerned this will limit participation in important programs and result in the programs not being sustained. Not many districts currently transport students outside of skills centers. Include skills centers in the list of exclusions. Tumwater Skills Center serves ten districts. Students are transported to the facility. If parents are responsible for costs, it might limit students' access. However, we would welcome the ability to cut costs.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Hatfield, prime sponsor.

CON: Allan Jones, OSPI; Marcia Fromhold, Washington Association for Public Transportation; Tim Knue, Washington Association for Career & Technical Education; Joe Kineuk, New Market Skills Center.