

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5572

As of February 16, 2011

Title: An act relating to the running start program.

Brief Description: Authorizing institutions of higher education to limit enrollment in the running start program.

Sponsors: Senators Kilmer, Becker, Shin, Haugen, Hobbs and Conway.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/11/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: Running Start is a dual-credit program that allows eligible high school juniors and seniors to take college-level courses at institutions of higher education. Upon successful completion of those courses, students are awarded both college credit and credit for high school courses required for graduation. Academic qualification is determined by the accepting college and students are responsible for transportation, books, and mandatory fees. For a full-time Running Start student, a school district retains 7 percent of the basic education allocation and provides the remainder to the institution of higher education. In 2010 Running Start enrolled 12,000 full-time equivalent students.

In 2009 the Legislature directed the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, in collaboration with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and institutions of higher education that offer Running Start, to develop long-term funding proposals for Running Start and report their recommendations to the Legislature by September 1, 2010.

Summary of Bill: An institution of higher education may establish policies that limit the number of Running Start students accepted for enrollment or in a specific program of study.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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.

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: There is tremendous value in Running Start. The challenge is we are very resource-constrained and that two-year colleges have record enrollment. As a consequence, the finance mechanism doesn't work for some Running Start institutions. Different colleges have different levels of enrollment. Some people have suggested charging tuition. This bill is a thoughtful path forward for those colleges who need it. This bill is a cost-effective way to increase educational attainment across state. Running Start is a popular and successful program that has grown steadily over the years. Running Start students are extremely successful; on average they have a higher GPA, more credits per quarter, and are earning a two-year degree while finishing high school. Running Start is helping our state have educated workers that we need with AA and BA degrees. Managing enrollments would provide flexibility for the colleges. Running Start was designed to give students an opportunity to fill open seats. The colleges are working closely with K-12 partners, because we don't want to disadvantage individuals. The college presidents are against charging tuition because there would be a loss in revenue if Running Start enrollments dropped off. We also don't know the impact on students if we charged tuition. Fees were implemented in 2009, and colleges are all over board on waiving fees for low-income students. Managing enrollments would be an interim step.

CON: Current Running Start policy is set up so students across the state can access Running Start no matter where they are. The bill gives higher education unilateral authority to limit access. OSPI doesn't want it to become more about where students can access Running Start. Students in the program can be home school and private school students as well. We understand the financial constraints, but we don't want to use those reasons to limit students' access. Running Start students are often smart but don't do well in high school. They might have a job or want to get through college in three years. Running Start often addresses a social need that advanced placement (AP) and international baccalaureate (IB) programs don't. Running Start has a guarantee of credit as opposed to AP and IB.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kilmer, prime sponsor; Denise Gaham, SBCTC; Michele Johnson, Pierce College District.

CON: Andrea Cobb, OSPI; Kelly Munn, League of Education Voters.