

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1412

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to community service as a high school graduation requirement.

Brief Description: Making community service a high school graduation requirement.

Sponsors: Representatives Bergquist, Zeiger, Maxwell, Reykdal, Kagi, Riccelli, Santos, Fitzgibbon, Tarleton, Lytton, Pollet, Farrell, Freeman, Ryu, Stonier, Stanford, Hunt, Van De Wege, Kochmar, Buys, Magendanz, Hayes, O'Ban, Fey, Morrell and Jinkins.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/12/13, 2/21/13 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires students to complete community service as a state high school graduation requirement, beginning with the class of 2017.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Stonier, Vice Chair; Bergquist, Haigh, Hunt, Lytton, Maxwell, McCoy, Orwall, Pollet and Seaquist.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Dahlquist, Ranking Minority Member; Magendanz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Fagan, Hargrove, Hawkins, Hayes, Klippert, Parker, Pike and Warnick.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

The State Board of Education (SBE) establishes minimum requirements for high school graduation through administrative rules. The current requirements are 20 credits among a specified distribution of subjects, a culminating project, and a High School and Beyond Plan.

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.

School district boards of directors may establish additional local high school graduation requirements. For example, according to a database developed by the SBE in 2011, at least 20 school districts require students to complete community service for graduation. The required number of hours ranges from 10 to 100.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Beginning with the graduating class of 2017, each student must complete community service as a state high school graduation requirement. The community service must be explained and documented using the student's culminating project. Only a school district may establish additional parameters and requirements for the community service. A student who has completed the requirement in one district and transfers in the senior year to another district is not required to complete additional community service.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Only a school district may establish additional requirements for the community service. A student who has completed the requirement in one district and transfers in the senior year is not required to complete additional community service.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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) Students should have the opportunity to think about what they are learning in high school as more than just a class. Many school districts in the state already require community service. Simply belonging to a club is not enough. Students should have the ability to say that they have done something for their high school or their community. Many will question the value of adding another graduation requirement. However, making community service a requirement will benefit most, if not all, students. They will be able to use this as a basis for college applications and put it on their resume.

(With concerns) Community service is ineffective. However, service learning is valuable. Service learning involves adding structure and learning components to accompany community service. Service learning can be incorporated into all grade levels, including middle school. Adding another graduation requirement takes away from local control.

(Opposed) This bill is opposed because it defeats the purpose of service. Community service should be something done out of the goodness of one's heart, not something forced on a student for graduation. The question becomes one of motivation and whether someone is doing this for the right reasons. There is much greater gratification from wanting to do something and being an ambassador for one's community. There are many opportunities for students to become involved in high school and community activities and organizations. Student organizations do community service. Personal motivation should be the reason for helping people. Students should be rewarded for their community service, not required to do it.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Bergquist, prime sponsor; Chi Ta; and Derrick Holt.

(With concerns) Patty Wood, Kelso School Board.

(Opposed) Kendall Todd; and Koralyne Kuch.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: Ben Rarick, State Board of Education; Marie Sullivan, Washington State School Directors' Association; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Education Association; and Dan Steele, Washington Association of School Administrators.