

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2626

As Passed House:
February 14, 2014

Title: An act relating to establishing statewide educational attainment goals.

Brief Description: Concerning statewide educational attainment goals.

Sponsors: House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Seaquist, Haler, Reykdal, Gregerson, Pollet and Moscoso).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/29/14, 1/31/14, 2/4/14 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/14/14, 87-10.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Sets out findings related to the critical role of educational attainment in the health of the state's economy.
- Declares statewide educational attainment goals required to meet the societal and economic needs of the future.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Seaquist, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Haler, Ranking Minority Member; Zeiger, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hansen, Hargrove, Johnson, Muri, Reykdal, Sawyer, Smith, Tarleton and Walsh.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Scott.

Staff: Madeleine Thompson (786-7304).

Background:

[The Washington Student Achievement Council.](#)

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.

Legislation enacted in 2012 created the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC). The WSAC must propose higher education attainment goals, recommend resources, monitor progress, propose improvements and innovations in higher education to adapt to evolving needs, and advocate for the higher education system.

The WSAC is required to take a leading role in higher education research and analysis, and link the work of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the State Board for Community and Technical College (SBCTC), the State Board of Education (SBE), the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board), public baccalaureate institutions, and independent schools and colleges.

State Higher Education Goals and Strategic Planning.

The WSAC must propose educational attainment goals and priorities aligned with the state's biennial budget and policy cycles. The goals must address the needs of Washington residents to reach higher levels of educational attainment and Washington's workforce needs for certificates and degrees in particular fields of study.

The WSAC must identify the resources to meet statewide goals and recognize current state economic conditions and resources. In proposing goals, the WSAC must collaborate with the OSPI, the PESB, the SBE, the SBCTC, the public baccalaureate institutions, independent colleges and degree-granting institutions, certificate-granting institutions, and the Workforce Board.

The WSAC is required to create a two-year strategic action plan, to be updated every two years and a Ten-Year Roadmap to be updated every two years. In order to conduct strategic planning the WSAC must collaborate with related agencies and stakeholders. Strategies must address:

- strategic planning, including setting benchmarks and goals for long-term degree production generally and in particular fields of study;
- expanding access, affordability, quality, efficiency, and accountability among the various institutions of higher education;
- higher education finance planning and strategic investments;
- system design and coordination;
- improving student transitions;
- higher education data and analysis, in collaboration with the Education Data and Research Center;
- college and career preparedness in collaboration with the OSPI and the SBE;
- expanding participation and success for racial and ethnic minorities in higher education; and
- relevant policy research.

The WSAC is charged with a variety of other duties including the administration of state financial aid, the regulation of for-profit, degree-granting institutions, and research.

WSAC Membership.

The WSAC comprises nine voting members as follows:

- five citizen members appointed by the Governor with the consent of the Senate, one of which must be a student; citizen members must represent the diversity of the state and the state's geography; four citizen members serve four-year terms and the student serves a one-year term;
- a representative of the public baccalaureate institutions selected by the presidents of public baccalaureate institutions;
- a representative of the community and technical college system, selected by the SBCTC;
- a representative of the K-12 system selected by the OSPI in consultation with the Department of Early Learning and the SBE; this member must excuse himself or herself from voting on matters pertaining primarily to institutions of higher education; and
- a representative of an independent, nonprofit higher education institution selected by an association of independent nonprofit baccalaureate degree-granting institutions; this member must excuse him or herself from matters that pertain primarily to public institutions.

The WSAC is permitted to convene ad hoc advisory committees. Any advisory committees addressing secondary to postsecondary transitions and university and college admissions requirements must include K-12 sector representatives including teachers, school directors, principals, administrators, and others.

Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill:

The Legislature finds that:

- increasing educational attainment is vital to the well-being of Washingtonians and critical to the health of the state's economy;
- education opens doors to gainful employment, higher wages, increased job benefits, improved physical health, and increased civic engagement;
- educated workers who are capable of competing for high-demand jobs in today's global economy sustain existing employers and attract new businesses;
- individuals with competitive higher education credentials directly contribute to the state's economic growth and vitality;
- workforce and labor market projections estimate that by 2020 the vast majority of jobs in Washington will require at least a high school diploma or equivalent and 70 percent of those jobs will also require some postsecondary education; and
- current levels of educational attainment are inadequate to address the educational needs of the state.

The prolonged impact of a major economic recession is noted. It is recognized that the state's higher education system must prepare to expand degree and certificate programs to meet the state's needs as reflected in the new goals adopted in this act. It is declared that a fundamental principle of the state is that the cost of tuition, where an individual resides in the state, and economic, racial, or other status of an individual, should not be a barrier for any resident to obtain a postsecondary certificate or degree from an institution of higher education.

The Legislature recognizes that one of the most important duties of the WSAC is to propose educational attainment goals to the Governor and the Legislature and develop the Ten-Year Roadmap to achieve those goals, to be updated every two years.

Following recommendations in the higher education Ten-Year Roadmap, the Legislature declares that the statewide educational attainment goals required to meet the societal and economic needs of the future are as follows:

1. All adults in Washington ages 25 to 44 will have a high school diploma or equivalent by 2023.
2. At least 70 percent of Washington adults ages 25 to 44 will have a postsecondary credential by 2023.
3. The cost of tuition, where an individual resides in the state, economic status, race or ethnicity, or other status of an individual, shall not be a barrier for any resident to obtain a postsecondary certificate or degree from an institution of higher education.

The Act expires July 1, 2016.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) One of the key strategic charges of the WSAC is to propose statewide educational attainment goals. High school students are the focus as well as Washington's workforce. There is value in high-level strategic planning and setting statewide goals in that they provide a unifying focal point for everyone to work on as they go forward. In developing the goals the WSAC looked at examples from other states that lead the nation, think tanks across the country, and received advice from stakeholders within the state. The WSAC reviewed economic and demographic data, and workforce surveys in order to develop these goals. The two attainment goals are at the top tier nationally. Education is vital for family wage jobs and for employers to remain competitive and that is why these goals are important. By ensuring that all of our residents are in high school and nearly three-quarters are in a postsecondary credential then no one is left behind. Perspectives related to apprenticeships are fully incorporated in this proposal. A bill has the capacity and the potential to make a profound effect on the lives of the citizens of our state, because the message it sends to Washington's families, schools, and colleges that the Legislature, the leadership of our state, understands that education is critical to the citizens and the economy of the state. This Roadmap provides a way of how everyone can reach these goals. It is important to address the tough questions about where the money is going to come from, where teachers will come from, and how to adjust to the changing demographics of the state. The proposal sends the message that Washington is ready to address these challenges.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Seaquist, prime sponsor; Gene Sharratt and Randy Spaulding, Washington Student Achievement Council; Nova Gattman, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; and Tom Fitzsimmons, Independent Colleges of Washington.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.