

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5180

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As of February 14, 2013

**Title:** An act relating to improving access to higher education for students with disabilities.

**Brief Description:** Improving access to higher education for students with disabilities.

**Sponsors:** Senators Shin, Roach, Benton, Conway, Harper, Keiser, Sheldon, McAuliffe, Hill, Hatfield, Frockt, Schlicher and Kline.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education: 2/07/13.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Staff:** Katherine Taylor (786-7434)

**Background:** Seattle University's Center for Change in Transitions Services (Center for Change) reported that in the 2009-10 school year there were 6760 special education high school students in Washington who either graduated, dropped out, or otherwise left their school between the ages of 16-21. Of these students, 4331 were contacted one year after leaving high school by the Center for Change. The Center for Change found that 25 percent enrolled in higher education, 22 percent were competitively employed, 5 percent were receiving some other form of education, 14 percent had some other form of employment, and 34 percent were not engaged in higher education or employment.

The Student Achievement Council was established on July 1, 2012, and provides strategic planning, oversight, and advocacy to support increased student success and higher levels of educational attainment in Washington. The nine-member Council includes five citizens, one current student, and one representative from each of the state's four major educational sectors. Agency staff support the work of the Council, performing assigned functions and managing the student financial aid programs previously administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board.

**Summary of Bill:** A legislative taskforce on improving access to higher education for students with disabilities is established.

The taskforce must not consist of more than 28 members.

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*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.*

The taskforce must collaborate to carry out multiple goals and make recommendations to the Legislature regarding students' transition from K-12 to higher education. Some of these goals and considerations include but are not limited to the following:

- making the transition from K-12 education to higher education more seamless and successful;
- selecting a statewide method of sharing best practices between education institutions;
- improving outreach to students and their families regarding available options in higher education; and
- investigating the creation of a statewide database of student disability accommodation equipment, software, and resources owned by school districts and postsecondary education institutions.

The Student Achievement Council provides staff support to the taskforce. The taskforce must report its recommendations to the Legislature by December 1, 2013, and annually thereafter until January 1, 2016.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** Yes.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: We are in favor of this bill because it creates an opportunity to protect the rights of people with disabilities. The bill supports the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Washington law against discrimination. There are a lot of barriers for people with disabilities. This bill is about solving problems. The employment statistics for people with disabilities are horrible. There is a big link between people with disabilities and poverty. Education is an equalizer. This helps people with disabilities realize the American dream. Only about 12.4 percent of people with disabilities have a Bachelor's of Arts degree in Washington. The employment that does not require a four-year degree is often employment that people with disabilities cannot do. Some students with disabilities have not been able to make it through the reasonable accommodation process. Some schools are not open minded about reasonable accommodation. Reasonable accommodations should be given. We support this bill. This bill will help prepare more of our population for the workforce. We need to have more collaboration between K-12 and higher education. This bill will help more people complete degrees. Higher education should be available to everyone. Documentation should be cheaper and easier to get. There should be more accessible bathrooms on college campuses. Some disabilities are invisible. Higher education is a dependable path. Many students with disabilities are given the impression that they are not college material. We need to educate and prepare all students under the ADA. Central Washington University (CWU) has the largest population of students with disabilities. There are concerns about mandates regarding best practices in documentation for higher education. Higher education wants to keep its judgment.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Nova Gattman, Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board; Brian Rowe, University of Washington Information School, Seattle University of Law; Megan Jasurda, Lower Columbia College; Ben Crowther, WA Student Assn.; David Lord, Disability Rights WA, Toby Olson, Governor's Committee on Disability Issues; Karen DeYoung, citizen; Steve DuPont, CWU.