

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6092

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As of January 28, 2014

**Title:** An act relating to credit requirements for high school graduation.

**Brief Description:** Concerning credit requirements for high school graduation.

**Sponsors:** Senators Litzow, Mullet, Dammeier, Frockt, Hill, Hobbs, Fain, Tom and Rolfes.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/27/14.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Staff:** Susan Mielke (786-7422)

**Background:** The State Board of Education (SBE) is statutorily authorized to establish the state minimum requirements for high school graduation through administrative rules. The current state requirements are to earn a minimum of 20 high school course credits; pass the state assessments or approved alternative assessments; complete a culminating project; and complete a high school and beyond plan (HSBP). The current credit requirements for the Class of 2014 are three credits in English and mathematics, two and one-half credits in social studies, two credits in science with one of the credits a lab science, two credits in health and fitness, one credit in the arts and occupational education, and five and one-half credits in electives.

In 2009 the Legislature redefined the Program of Basic Education to provide students with the opportunity to complete 24 credits for high school graduation, subject to a phase-in implementation established by the Legislature. The course distribution requirements may be established by SBE. Changes in graduation requirements proposed by SBE must be submitted to the legislative education committees and the Quality Education Council for review before they are adopted. Changes that are found to have a fiscal impact on school districts take effect only if formally authorized and funded by the Legislature.

In 2010 SBE approved, but did not implement, a 24-credit high school graduation framework. In 2011, SBE implemented a phase-in of changes within the existing required 20 credits that were estimated to have no cost to school districts, to take effect with the graduating class of 2016, although districts may seek a two-year extension to implement the requirements. The changes require an additional credit in English for a total of four, an

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additional one-half credit in social studies for a total of three, and one and one-half fewer credits in elective courses for a total of 4. Additionally, SBE adopted a two-for-one policy that enables students taking a career and technical education course that is equivalent to an academic course to satisfy two graduation requirements while earning one credit.

In 2014 SBE adopted revisions to its 24-credit graduation requirement framework originally adopted in 2010. The current proposal differs from the requirements for the class of 2016 by requiring an additional credit in lab science and the arts, and two additional credits in world languages. One of the arts credits and both world languages credits may be substituted with personal pathway requirements. Personalized pathway requirements are credits that can be substituted if associated with a student's post-secondary pathway, as provided in the student's HSBP.

While the issue has not been addressed in the Washington State courts, federal and other state courts have generally found that when high school graduation requirements are increased then sufficient notice must be provided to entering students so the students know what is required to earn a diploma and graduate from high school. Freshman students entering high school next year in the 2014-15 school year will be in the graduating class of 2018, if they graduate in four years.

**Summary of Bill:** SBE must include in the high school graduation requirements the opportunity for students to complete 24 credits for graduation beginning with the graduating class of 2018. Each school district must provide instruction that provides students the opportunity to complete 24 credits for graduation beginning with the graduating class of 2018.

**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 are not preparing our students effectively, which is demonstrated by the number of students who need remedial education. Please do not give up on a meaningful diploma with 24 course credits required. The third credit of science is critical for students to be successful in the world economy in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). This is a modest change. Washington is just catching up with the states that already require three science credits.

CON: We support more rigor, but then additional support must be provided to support students that struggle. The 24-credit requirement should be delayed one year because many eighth graders take courses for high school credit and are planning those credits when they are in seventh grade.

OTHER: The \$97 million provided for implementing the additional instructional hours will not fully implement a 24-credit graduation requirement. The 2012 Joint Task Force on

Education Funding reported that it would take \$941 million for schools to implement the requirement for 24 credits for high school graduation. Additionally, most districts require 150 hours to earn a credit. This shows a disconnect with the additional 80 instructional hours. Additional credits, including the additional science lab requirement, will necessitate additional curriculum changes, technology, and teachers. There will also be capital needs that will require funding. Changes such as these must be done with a great deal more study. This should be delayed one year. Districts cannot be ready for the freshman this coming year. Implementing the 24-credit framework and the increase in instructional hours at the same time will have a questionable impact on students. Instead, let school districts begin to phase in the 24-credit requirement without the increase in instructional hours, and the increase in hours will happen. Please provide flexibility for independent private schools. We support multiple pathways for students to get to graduation, but have concerns about sufficient supports for students to meet the 24-credit requirements. Students will need to have access to the necessary info about how different courses will count.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Caroline King, WA STEM; Ben Rarick, SBE; Anne Heavey, Policy Manager, Partnership for Learning, WA Roundtable; Frank Ordway, League Of Education Voters.

CON: Jim Kowalkowski, Davenport School District & Rural Ed. Center; Shawn Lewis, WA Education Assn.; Tim Knue, WA Assn. for Career and Technical Education.

OTHER: Gary Cohn, Everett School District; Dan Steele, WA Assn. of School Administrators; Justin Montermini, Workforce Board; Frank Hewins, Franklin Pierce School District, Puget Sound Educational School District Superintendents; Suzie Hanson, WA Federation of Independent Schools.