

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1592

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to tuition waivers for state and educational employees.

Brief Description: Concerning tuition waivers for state and educational employees.

Sponsors: Representatives S. Hunt, Sells, Hayes, Bergquist, Santos, Pollet, Sullivan, Moscoso and Wylie.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/6/15, 2/17/15 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Adds K-12 classified staff to the list of state and educational employees eligible to receive tuition and fee waivers at Washington's public institutions of higher education if the waiver is used for coursework relevant to their work assignment.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Bergquist, Gregory, Reykdal, Sells and Tarleton.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Zeiger, Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove, Holy and Van Werven.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Stambaugh.

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

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.

Tuition and Fee Waivers.

There are two categories of tuition waivers: state supported and discretionary. State supported waivers may require the institutions to waive tuition and fees for a certain category of people. Some of these people include individuals and their children who were wrongly convicted of a crime, recipients of the Washington Scholars Award, or children and surviving spouses of law enforcement officers, firefighters, or Washington State Patrol officers who lost their lives or became totally disabled in the line of duty.

Some tuition and fee waivers are allowed under statute, but not required. For example, the institutions may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for eligible veterans and National Guard members, students of foreign nations, or for Washington residents 60 years of age or older. However, the institutions are limited in their tuition and fee waiver authority in that the total amount of tuition and fee revenue waived, exempted, or reduced may not exceed a percentage of their estimated gross operating fee revenue. The institutions are allowed to waive up to a certain portion of their total operating fee revenue, but they are not required to. The institutions' percentage caps are as follows:

- University of Washington is 21 percent;
- Washington State University is 20 percent;
- Eastern Washington University is 11 percent;
- Central Washington University is 10 percent;
- Western Washington University is 10 percent;
- The Evergreen State College is 10 percent; and
- community colleges as a whole are 35 percent.

Discretionary waivers allow the institutions to waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for any reason outside of those authorized by the state. These discretionary waivers are not covered under the waiver percentage caps, but they are also not state supported. This means that the institutions cannot expect additional state money to backfill forgone tuition revenue.

Another type of state-supported waiver that is not required, but optional, is for state and educational employees. To be eligible for the waiver, a state employee is considered someone who is:

- employed half-time or more as a permanent employee in classified service under the State Civil Service Law;
- a permanent employee governed under the Public Employees' Collective Bargaining Agreement; or
- a faculty, counselor, librarian, or exempt professional or administrative employee at an institution of higher education.

The waiver is also available for teachers and other certified instructional staff employed at public common and vocational schools that are holding, or seeking, a valid endorsement and assigned in a state-identified shortage area.

Classified Staff.

A K-12 classified employee is a person who does not hold a professional education certificate or is employed in a position that does not require such a certificate. These classified staff encompass a wide variety of positions in the schools, such as instructional assistants, library

technicians, guidance specialists, office managers, security officers, behavior assistants, and many more.

Summary of Bill:

K-12 classified staff employed at public common and vocational schools are eligible for a full or partial tuition, service, and activity fee waiver at the public institutions of higher education when the waiver is used for coursework relevant to their work assignment.

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) Washington should have the best trained people in its schools. Classified staff are partners to teachers and are an essential link to parents and students in the community. Classified staff provide supervision, and there is very little training for that. This bills helps open the door to training generally not available in the school district as the state has not been able to afford professional development for classified staff. This helps close a missing link in the education system. The bill adds classified staff into an existing tuition waiver system, and therefore, it allows the opportunity for many classified staff, such as paraeducators, to become teachers.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Hunt, prime sponsor; Kathie Axtell and Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.