

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1983

As Reported by House Committee On:

Education
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to a pilot project on financial assistance for teachers taking basic skills and content tests for teacher certification programs.

Brief Description: Creating the TEACH pilot project of financial assistance for teachers taking basic skills and content tests for teacher certification programs.

Sponsors: Representatives Pollet, Zeiger, S. Hunt, Haler and Bergquist.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/12/15, 1/18/16, 1/21/16 [DPS];
Appropriations: 2/1/16, 2/8/16 [DP2S(w/o sub ED)].

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Establishes, subject to funding, the Teacher Endorsement and Certification Help (TEACH) pilot project to assist qualified individuals with the costs of basic skills and content tests required for teacher certification and endorsement.
- Grants related rule-making duties to the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC).
- Requires the WSAC and the Professional Educator Standards Board to submit a preliminary and final report on the TEACH pilot project to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 31, 2018, and December 31, 2020, respectively.
- Expires the TEACH pilot project on June 30, 2021.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Ortiz-Self, Vice Chair; Reykdal, Vice Chair; Magendanz, Ranking Minority Member; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member;

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Stambaugh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Griffey, Hargrove, Harris, Hayes, Kilduff, Kuderer, McCaslin, Orwall, Pollet, Rossetti and Springer.

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

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

Basic Skills and Content Tests for Teacher Certification.

To obtain a teacher certificate, candidates must pass a basic skills test that includes at least reading, writing, and mathematics. Each teacher certificate must include at least one endorsement that identifies the subject matter and grade levels that the certificate holder is authorized to teach. Expertise in a subject can be established by the passage of a content knowledge test.

Washington's 21 approved teacher preparation programs require candidates to pass a basic skills test prior to admittance, and a content knowledge test prior to applying for certification with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Basic skills tests fees range from \$155 to \$225, and content knowledge test fees range from \$95 to \$155. Test takers must also pay a \$35 registration fee.

Washington Student Achievement Council Conditional Scholarship Programs.

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) was created by the Legislature in 2012 to provide strategic planning, oversight, advocacy, and programs to support increased student success and higher levels of educational attainment in Washington. The WSAC administers the majority of the state's student financial aid programs and is the fiscal agent for conditional scholarship programs that forgive all or part of a loan awarded through a program in exchange for service in their endorsement area as a certificated teacher at a K-12 public school. While requirements and limitations vary by program, scholarship recipients may use awarded funds for the costs of tuition, fees, and educational expenses, including books, supplies, and transportation.

Professional Educator Standards Board.

The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), the 12-member board charged with establishing policies and requirements for the preparation and certification of educators, measures teacher shortages by looking at how quickly teachers find teaching positions in Washington's public schools. The PESB also designates official personnel shortage areas based on periodic analysis of educator supply and demand in the state.

According to the PESB, teachers with multiple endorsements are more likely to be hired than teachers with a single endorsement. The PESB has also indicated that teachers with a special education endorsement or with science and math endorsements are generally hired more quickly than teachers with social studies, history, or English language arts endorsements.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Teacher Endorsement and Certification Help (TEACH) pilot project is created to develop an expandable program that provides grants to teachers taking basic skills and content tests for teacher certification programs. The creation of the program is dependent upon funds being specifically appropriated by the Legislature for its establishment, and authorization for the project expires June 30, 2021.

The WSAC, after consultation with the PESB, is charged with developing and adopting rules by August 1, 2016 to administer the TEACH pilot project. The rules must satisfy specified requirements including establishing grant application and financial need verification processes.

To qualify for financial assistance under the TEACH pilot project, an applicant must:

- be enrolled in, have applied to, or have completed a teacher preparation program approved by the PESB;
- show a financial need, as demonstrated by the student's eligibility to receive the state need grant; and
- register for an endorsement competency test in endorsement shortage areas.

Grant funds awarded under the TEACH pilot project must be awarded beginning September 1, 2016 to cover the costs of basic skills and content tests required for teacher certification. In awarding funds, the WASC must prioritize grant awards first, to applicants registered for competency tests in endorsement shortage areas and second, to applicants with the greatest financial need. The WASC is required to scale the number of TEACH pilot grant awards to the amount of appropriated funds.

The WSAC, in collaboration with the PESB, must submit a preliminary report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 31, 2018 that details the effectiveness and costs of the TEACH pilot project. The preliminary report must comply with specific requirements, including comparing the numbers and demographic information of students taking and passing tests in the endorsement shortage areas before and after implementation of the TEACH pilot project. A final report that details the effectiveness and costs of the TEACH pilot project and includes a recommendation as to whether the pilot project should be modified, continued, or expanded is due to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 31, 2020.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill changes the date the WSAC, in collaboration with the PESB, must adopt rules to administer the TEACH pilot project from August 1, 2015 to August 1, 2016. The substitute bill also changes the date the WSAC, in collaboration with the PESB, must award a grant under the TEACH pilot project from September 1, 2015, to September 1, 2016.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on January 21, 2016.

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) This bill represents a small but potentially significant effort to help Washington address the teacher shortage issue. This is the result of meeting with student and teacher education programs about a year and a half ago at Central Washington University. At that time, students described how they were struggling to pay for teacher certification tests that are not covered by financial aid. The costs of teacher certification can exceed the costs of text books. It is vital that Washington do something for students with financial need that are pursuing an endorsement in an area with a teacher shortage.

There are costs associated with certification: the content and basic education tests are \$120 with a \$35 registration fee. The cost of retaking a test is \$65, and if a teacher is interested in testing in more than one content area, that increases the cost of the exam to \$240. For a teacher seeking to have a robust credential, the testing costs might exceed \$600. For out-of-state teachers, reciprocity on content tests can help to reduce some costs. Additionally, test vendors do offer tuition cost waivers for some low-income teacher candidates.

This bill is one piece of the puzzle-there is no silver bullet for solving the teacher shortage, but this will help to make the profession of teaching competitive in the minds of students that are considering teaching. Other teacher relief proposals should be enacted. The expiration date should be removed because the certification associated costs will not go away.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Pollet, prime sponsor; David Brenna, Professional Educators Standards Board; and Bob Cooper, Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Education. Signed by 22 members: Representatives Dunshee, Chair; Ormsby, Vice Chair; Cody, Fitzgibbon, Haler, Hansen, Harris, Hudgins, S. Hunt, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, MacEwen, Magendanz, Pettigrew, Robinson, Sawyer, Senn, Springer, Sullivan, Tharinger and Walkinshaw.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Parker, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Wilcox, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buys, Dent, Schmick, Stokesbary, Taylor and Van Werven.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Condotta and Manweller.

Staff: Jessica Harrell (786-7349).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Education:

The second substitute bill modifies eligibility criteria for the Teacher Endorsement and Certification Help pilot project grant program by allowing applicants to be (in accordance with a definition of financial need established by the Office of Student Financial Assistance of the Washington Student Achievement Council and consistent with income criteria for the State Need Grant) qualifying persons demonstrating financial need, rather than only qualifying undergraduate students demonstrating financial need.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on February 11, 2016.

Effective Date of Second 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) The teacher shortage is severe and will get worse. The state is producing graduates who do not have the endorsements that are needed in classrooms solely because of the costs of tests. For \$250,000, the state could have teachers with a wider array of endorsements that could be provided through the grant program in this bill. This bill represents one key element that could be accomplished quickly to address the teacher shortage and to add students who, when they graduate, will have extra teaching endorsements.

The policy in this bill has been refined over time and originates from conversations that began about 18 months ago. The bill is part of a larger omnibus bill that Representative Pollet hopes to have the Appropriations Committee consider later this session. The state did not create a teacher shortage problem with a single issue, and the state will not resolve the issue with a single bill. This bill represents one strategy; hopefully it is one in a more comprehensive package of strategies addressing the teacher shortage issue.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Pollet, prime sponsor; and Bob Cooper, Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.