

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2804

As Reported by House Committee On: Higher Education

Title: An act relating to including highway workers employed on a transportation project by a contractor in the tuition and fee exemption for children and surviving spouses of highway workers.

Brief Description: Including highway workers employed on a transportation project by a contractor in the tuition and fee exemption for children and surviving spouses of highway workers.

Sponsors: Representatives Haler, Clibborn, Moscoso, Stambaugh, Sawyer, Kochmar, Hickel, Zeiger, Ortiz-Self, Sells, Fitzgibbon, Farrell, Reykdal, Springer, Orwall, Muri, Santos, Pettigrew, Ormsby, Goodman, Stokesbary, Kilduff, Orcutt, Fey, Tarleton, Hayes, McBride, Morris, Stanford, Pollet, Frame and Bergquist.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/2/16, 2/3/16 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Expands the definition of "highway worker" for the purposes of tuition waivers, to include public sector employees employed by a transportation agency and construction trades workers employed by a general contractor or subcontractor, on a transportation project.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Zeiger, Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Frame, Holy, Reykdal, Sells, Stambaugh and Tarleton.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Hargrove and Van Werven.

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.

Staff: Ellie Page (786-7291) and Trudes Tango (786-7384).

Background:

State law authorizes institutions of higher education, defined as state universities, regional universities, The Evergreen State College, and community and technical colleges to grant discretionary and mandatory tuition and fee waivers and exemptions. State and regional universities and The Evergreen State College are generally authorized to grant different waivers than community and technical colleges.

State universities, regional universities, and The Evergreen State College may award discretionary waivers under specified conditions to a variety of individuals, such as foreign students and residents sixty years of age or older. Mandatory waivers must be awarded in specific circumstances to wrongly convicted persons and their children, Washington Scholar students, and children and spouses of veterans or National Guard members. In addition, spouses and children of firefighters, state patrol officers, law enforcement officers, and highway workers, who lost their lives or became totally disabled in the line of duty, are exempt from payment of all tuition fees, and services and activities fees. However, children and spouses of highway workers qualify for an exemption only if the highway worker was killed or became disabled while employed by a transportation agency, including agencies, departments, or divisions of state and municipal government, but excluding government contractors.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

"Highway worker" is defined more broadly to mean a public sector employee employed by a transportation agency or a construction trades worker employed by a general contractor or subcontractor, on a transportation project.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The original bill defined "highway worker" to include only construction trades workers employed by a general contractor, subcontractor, or a transportation agency, on a transportation project. The amended bill expands the definition of "highway worker" to mean a public sector employee employed by a transportation agency or a construction trades worker employed by a general contractor or subcontractor on a transportation project.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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) Highway workers, including those employed by a contractor, have the highest fatality rate of any construction workers. Regardless of who employs the highway worker, the children and spouses of highway workers who are killed or totally disabled on the job should have access to tuition waivers so loss of income does not prevent them from attending an institution of higher education.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) Expanding the scope of the definition of highway worker to make additional children and spouses eligible to receive tuition waivers is a positive development, but there is concern that the language in the bill could exclude public employees who are already covered.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Haler, prime sponsor; Heather Arrants; and Terry Tilton, Pacific Northwest Carpenters.

(Other) Vince Oliveri, Professional and Technical Employees Local 17.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.