

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1238

As of March 17, 2015

Title: An act relating to affordable tuition planning.

Brief Description: Concerning affordable tuition planning.

Sponsors: House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Pollet, Haler, Bergquist, Hargrove, Sells, Fitzgibbon, Fey and Tarleton).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/05/15, 60-38.

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 3/17/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: In 2012 the Legislature created the nine-member Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC). WSAC's mission is threefold: (1) propose goals for increasing the educational attainment in Washington, recommend resources to achieve the goals, and monitor progress toward meeting those goals; (2) propose improvements and innovations needed for educational attainment; and (3) advocate for higher education.

Specific WSAC duties include developing a strategic action plan every two years and a ten-year roadmap that identifies WSAC's strategies for meeting goals and priorities.

For 2014, the Office of Financial Management projects Washington's median household income (MHI) to be \$58,686. According to the United States Census Bureau's American Community Surveys as of July 2014, Washington's median family income (MFI) for a family of four is estimated to be \$83,863.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature's goals are to use the total cost of attendance when considering student financial aid policy to accurately represent the cost of higher education and make higher education accessible and affordable for all families. The Legislature sets a long-term goal for tuition to be no higher than 10 percent of MFI at public institutions of higher education.

WSAC must report to the Legislature on the affordability of the higher education system as it develops its strategic action plan and updates its ten-year roadmap. By December 15, 2016,

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WSAC must report on tuition rates at public institutions of higher education and how they compare to the state's MHI and MFI. The report must, at a minimum:

- show how tuition, as a percentage of MHI and MFI, has changed over time;
- quantify how much state support would be required to restore tuition to no more than 10 percent of MHI and MFI at each institution;
- propose parameters for an appropriate share of the state's MHI and MFI for the four-year institutions of higher education; and
- provide strategies to ensure that tuition at any institution is no greater than 10 percent of MFI.

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: Tuition is above 20 percent of MHI. Tuition is one-half the cost of attendance, which makes the cost even higher. Families have tremendous debt if two to three kids go to college. We could include the state average annual wage metric in the study as well.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Pollet, prime sponsor.