

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## HB 1977

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Higher Education, March 26, 2015

**Title:** An act relating to a tuition and fees exemption for children and surviving spouses of certain highway workers.

**Brief Description:** Creating a tuition and fees exemption for children and surviving spouses of certain highway workers.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Moscoso, Orcutt, Clibborn, Bergquist, Zeiger, Pollet and Tarleton.

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/11/15, 58-40.

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education: 3/17/15, 3/26/15 [DP-WM].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chair; Kohl-Welles, Ranking Minority Member; Becker, Frockt, Lias and Miloscia.

**Staff:** Evan Klein (786-7483)

**Background:** Under current law, 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 are exempt from tuition, services, and activity fees at public four-year institutions of higher education.

**Summary of Bill:** The public four-year institutions of higher education must exempt from the payment of all tuition fees and services and activity fees, children and surviving spouses of any highway workers who lost their lives or became totally disabled in the line of duty while employed by a transportation agency.

Transportation agency is defined as any agency, department, or division of a municipal corporation, political subdivision, or other unit of local government in this state, and any agency, department, or division of state government, having as its primary function the construction and maintenance of the highways and roads within the state of Washington. Such an agency, department, or division is distinguished from a transit agency having as one

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of its functions highway maintenance, including but not limited to the state Department of Transportation. A transportation agency does not include a government contractor.

**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: The workers who build and maintain our state's roads and highways are exposed to occupational hazards, and this bill helps support the families of these workers who die in the line of duty. It is important to recognize that these folks take on some of the same dangers as our other first responders. Knowing that this aid exists could mean a lot to the Department of Transportation (WSDOT) employees who are working out in the field. There are six surviving children from age six to 18 that would currently be eligible for the benefits associated with this bill.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Moscoso, prime sponsor; Bill Ford, WSDOT Memorial Foundation; Kate Rogers, WA Federation of State Employees; Vince Oliveri, Professional and Technical Employees Local 17; Chris Christopher, WSDOT.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** PRO: Greg Salstead, WSDOT.