

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5559

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 10, 2015

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

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

Sponsors: Senators Billig, McAuliffe, Conway, Litzow, Rolfes, Rivers and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/05/15, 2/10/15 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

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

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: Tuition waivers provided by public institutions of higher education fall into one of three categories: state-supported, discretionary, and space available.

For state-supported waivers only, it has been assumed that tuition not collected from students to whom the waivers are granted is offset by state funding in the institutions' budgets. These waivers are subject to caps on the maximum percentages of gross operating fee revenue that each institution or sector can waive. A few mandatory waivers exist in state statute concerning the children and spouses of veterans and law enforcement officers who became totally disabled or lost their lives in the line of duty.

Public institutions have the authority to waive tuition to any undergraduate or graduate student for any purpose. These discretionary waivers are not subject to caps, but none of the foregone tuition revenue is made up by the state.

Under current law, public institutions of higher education may waive all or a portion of the tuition and services and activities fees for state employees, teachers, and certain certificated instructional staff. However, the following conditions exist: these students must register for

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and be enrolled in courses on a space-available basis; enrollment information must be maintained separate from official enrollment reports; and a registration fee is required.

Summary of Bill: Public four-year and two-year institutions of higher education may waive all or a portion of the tuition and services and activities fees for public school K–12 classified staff when their coursework is relevant to their work assignment.

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: This bill allows classified staff to further build their skills on a space-available basis. It opens the doors for paraeducators. Paraeducators' work has changed dramatically over the years. They collaborate with teachers and work with small groups of students. However, when it comes to training, it varies across the state even though they provide similar duties as teachers. Often paraeducators have to pay for their own education. It makes sense to open up an existing waiver system for specific courses for the work performed by classified staff. Most classified members grew up in the community where they work.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Billig, prime sponsor; Cathy Smith, Olympia Paraeducators Assn.; Barbara Gapper, Port Angeles Paraeducators; Lucinda Young, WA Education Assn.