

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5676

As of February 16, 2015

Title: An act relating to the acceptance of additional high school equivalency tests.

Brief Description: Concerning the acceptance of additional high school equivalency tests.

Sponsors: Senators Roach, Rolfes, Jayapal, Hargrove and Hasegawa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/12/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: By taking and passing a series of High School Equivalency (HSE) tests, adults can demonstrate they have acquired the same level of knowledge as those who graduated from high school. An HSE certificate is issued jointly by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

SBCTC oversees the HSE testing program, which must include testing in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. Washington State currently uses the four-part GED tests for its HSE test. The cost is \$30 per test, or \$120 for all four tests.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature intends to ensure that adults who want to earn an HSE certificate have access to a variety of test options that are appropriate, low cost, and flexible.

SBCTC must identify at least one test option for each of the following:

- a test that is low cost to the student;
- a test that does not require computer proficiency; and
- a test that is appropriate for students who have been in the workforce and need a high school diploma for employment reasons; have been incarcerated or in the military; have been removed from any academic environment for four years or more; or are not planning to pursue a college education.

SBCTC must communicate the menu of accepted test options to public and private administrators of HSE tests.

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.

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: Today we have common core, but we did not a few years ago. We want to make sure that the test that is given is based on learning that took place when they left high school. The HSE test should be adopted. This will not violate the contract with Pearson. Kids that don't get a GED will increase costs to taxpayers because studies show that these students are more likely to become incarcerated. When the GED legislation passed in 2013, the idea was to open up the market. But we just replaced one market-ready test with another. This bill opens up the option for other tests on market.

CON: The state removed the trademark GED from statute and completed a request for proposal. Upon review, SBCTC selected the new GED test. There has been a drop in test takers, which is normal when a new test is given. Technology allows more access to test takers. College and career readiness standards are required by the federal government. Under the old test, many students took the GED and went right back into basic skill courses.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Roach, prime sponsor, David Spring, Don Bunger, Restore GED Fairness Coalition; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, WA Education Assn.; Judith da Silva, Marcia Leister, citizens.

CON: Lou Sager, SBCTC.