
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1238

State of Washington

64th Legislature

2015 Regular Session

By House Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Pollet, Haler, Bergquist, Hargrove, Sells, Fitzgibbon, Fey, and Tarleton)

READ FIRST TIME 02/16/15.

1 AN ACT Relating to affordable tuition planning; creating new
2 sections; and providing an expiration date.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature intends that the cost
5 of tuition, where an individual resides in the state, economic
6 status, race or ethnicity, or other status of an individual, should
7 not be a barrier for any resident to obtain a postsecondary
8 certificate or degree from an institution of higher education. The
9 legislature recognizes that when tuition and the total cost of
10 attendance at institutions of higher education significantly exceed
11 ten percent of median family income, it can create barriers to
12 accessing the opportunities of higher education, including increasing
13 student debt burdens for most Washington residents. It is the
14 legislature's intent to examine a range of alternatives to ensure
15 that the opportunity of higher education is accessible and affordable
16 for every resident.

17 (2) The legislature finds that student loan debt has become a
18 lifetime barrier to improving the quality of life for many
19 Washingtonians. The legislature recognizes that federal student loan
20 programs are scheduled to increase interest rates, while average debt
21 is increasing to twenty-eight thousand dollars for a bachelor's

1 degree. If loan interest rates rise to eight percent, this will
2 threaten students' abilities to choose to pursue public service
3 careers with starting salaries in the thirty thousand dollars to
4 fifty thousand dollars range due to debt payments of over five
5 thousand dollars per year.

6 (3) The legislature finds that financial aid programs, such as
7 the college bound scholarship program and the state need grant
8 program, do not adequately address affordability for many students
9 whose families earn fifty to seventy percent of the median household
10 income and currently provide no support for those who are truly in
11 the middle of the state's income distribution. The legislature's goal
12 is to use the total cost of attendance as a factor when considering
13 student financial aid policy to accurately represent the true cost of
14 higher education.

15 (4) The legislature recognizes that in 2002 the state's share of
16 spending relative to tuition at public baccalaureate institutions was
17 seventy-six percent and in 2012 it dropped to thirty-six percent. The
18 legislature finds that this defunding of higher education at the
19 state level has resulted in a reduction in access and opportunity.
20 For example tuition at the University of Washington rose from ten
21 percent of the median family income to over twenty percent in just
22 five years.

23 (5) The legislature's goal is to make higher education accessible
24 and affordable for all families and it sets a long-term goal for
25 tuition at public institutions of higher education to be no higher
26 than ten percent of the median family income.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) As the student achievement council
28 conducts its planning and outlines strategies as described in RCW
29 28B.77.020, it shall report to the legislature on the affordability
30 of the higher education system.

31 (2) Since affordability is central to the state's efforts to
32 reach the educational attainment goals, the student achievement
33 council shall report by December 15, 2016, on tuition rates at the
34 institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016 and how
35 they compare to the state's median household and median family
36 incomes. The report shall, at a minimum:

37 (a) Show how tuition, as a percentage of median household and
38 median family incomes, has changed over time;

1 (b) Quantify how much state support would be required to restore
2 tuition at each institution to no more than ten percent of the
3 state's median household and family incomes;

4 (c) Propose parameters for an appropriate share of the state's
5 median household and median family incomes for the state
6 universities, the regional universities, and the state college; and

7 (d) Provide strategies to ensure that tuition at any institution
8 is no greater than ten percent of the state's median family income.

9 (3) This section expires June 30, 2017.

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