

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1433

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to decoupling services and activities fees from tuition.

Brief Description: Decoupling services and activities fees from tuition.

Sponsors: Representatives Stambaugh, Orwall, Haler, Tarleton, Jinkins, Pollet, Stonier, Ryu, Hargrove, Santos and Doglio.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/7/17, 2/15/17 [DPS];

Appropriations: 2/23/17, 2/24/17 [DPS(HE)].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Removes the provision tying the annual increase of student and activity fees to the percentage increase in student tuition fees for the four-year public institutions.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Minority Member; Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Orwall, Sells, Stambaugh and Tarleton.

Staff: Trudes Tango (786-7384).

Background:

Services and activities (S&A) fees are used to fund student activities and programs. Governing boards at institutions of higher education may increase the S&A fee annually. The authorizing statute provides that the annual increase may not exceed the percentage increase of the annual percentage increase in student tuition fees for resident undergraduate students.

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.

The percentage increase does not apply to that portion of the S&A fees previously committed to the repayment of bonded debt. Those adjustments may exceed the fiscal growth factor. In the 2013-15 and 2015-17 fiscal biennia, the Legislature authorized governing boards to increase the S&A fees by amounts judged reasonable and necessary by the S&A fee committee and the governing board, as opposed to having the increase tied to tuition.

Each institution has an S&A fee committee, and students have a majority of the voting membership on the committee. Student groups and campus programs submit proposals to the S&A fee committee, which reviews the proposals and recommends how S&A fees should be allocated. The S&A fee committee recommends a final budget to the institution's governing board, which is required to give priority consideration to the committee's recommendations.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The provision limiting the annual increase of S&A fees to the percentage increase in student tuition fees is removed for the four-year public institutions, and instead, S&A fees may be increased by amounts judged reasonable and necessary by the S&A fee committee and the governing board.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute retains current law for S&A fee increases at community and technical colleges.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill is for and by students. It does in statute what the Legislature has already been doing in the budget. The S&A fee committees consist of a majority of students, and they vote on whether to increase their own fee. Students know what their campus and students need. The S&A fees fund programs like the LGBTQ centers, child care centers, and student recreation centers. Students are deeply invested in their schools, and this bill gives students autonomy to better manage their own needs.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Stambaugh, prime sponsor; and Bryce Hammer, Western Washington University; and Emily Christianson, The Evergreen State College.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill by Committee on Higher Education be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 27 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Cody, Fitzgibbon, Haler, Hansen, Harris, Hudgins, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, Manweller, Nealey, Pettigrew, Pollet, Sawyer, Senn, Springer, Stanford, Sullivan, Tharinger, Vick, Volz and Wilcox.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Stokesbary, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buys, Condotta, Schmick and Taylor.

Staff: Lily Sobolik (786-7157).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Higher Education:

No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Services and activity (S&A) fees are used to fund student activities that are non-academic and increases are linked with tuition increases. This inconsistency can have a negative impact on student services, like health care, veteran services, childcare, and student government. Students should not have uncertainty about these services continuing. The S&A fees range from about \$400 to \$700 and this bill would permanently decouple fees from tuition. Next year tuition is set to increase by about 2.1 percent so S&A fees could only increase by 2.1 percent; this would not be enough to cover the recent minimum wage increase. This would mean either cutting student services or laying off student workers. This bill is a simple fix and it has been working for the last four years. Decoupling S&A fees from tuition is really about student accountability and autonomy to set their own fees. There is no fiscal note. One school reports a current deficit of \$100,000; due to this and an increase in minimum wage, the S&A fee would need to increase by about 5 percent. This is a relatively small increase to make sure students have access to childcare and student workers stay employed.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Maresa Miranda, Associated Students of Washington Student Association; Michael Scott, Associated Students of Central Washington University; Alexander Wirth, Associated Students of the University of Washington; and Benjamin Huff, The Evergreen State College.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.