

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2854

As Reported by House Committee On: Higher Education

Title: An act relating to establishing pilot programs to plan for the needs of certain college students experiencing homelessness.

Brief Description: Establishing pilot programs to plan for the needs of certain college students experiencing homelessness.

Sponsors: Representatives Sells, Kloba, Lovick, Peterson, Frame, Dolan, Valdez, Robinson, Sawyer, Blake, Appleton, Haler, Kagi, Stanford, Doglio, Slatter, Pollet, Santos and Goodman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/24/18,1/31/18 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates pilot programs at community and technical colleges and the four-year institutions of higher education to plan for and accommodate homeless students.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Orwall, Sells, Stambaugh and Tarleton.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Holy, Ranking Minority Member; Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Haler.

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

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 State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (State Board) is a state agency led by a nine-member governor-appointed board that is charged with coordinating and advocating on behalf of the state's 34 community and technical colleges. The community and technical colleges are located in 30 college districts across the state. Community and technical colleges have open door policies, and their purpose is to provide comprehensive education and training that meets the needs of the community, basic skills and literacy education, and apprenticeship opportunities.

The Student Achievement Council (Council) is the state agency tasked with providing strategic planning, oversight, and advocacy to support increased student success and higher levels of education attainment. The Council is responsible for authorizing degree-granting institutions, administering the state's financial aid programs, setting minimum college admission standards, and providing research and policy recommendations.

Homeless often refers to a condition where an individual lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) includes several questions to help colleges and universities determine if a student is homeless. The college or university then needs to verify a student's status, such as through documentation provided by a shelter or through a financial aid administrator.

Summary of Bill:

The State Board and the Council must both establish pilot programs to encourage the community and technical college districts and the four-year higher education institutions to plan for the needs and challenges of homeless students. Plans to accommodate homeless students may include laundry facilities, storage, showers, free or reduced-price meals, short-term housing, an annual stipend for purchasing clothing or technology, establishing a case manager program for assisting homeless and at-risk students, or plans to develop surplus property for affordable housing.

The State Board pilot program must include four college districts, with two on each side of the Cascade Mountains. The Council pilot program must include two four-year higher education institutions, one on each side of the Cascade Mountains. The pilot programs must both report to the Legislature by December 1, 2023. The reports must include data on the number of students experiencing homelessness, the number of students assisted, and strategies for accommodating students experiencing homelessness. The pilot programs expire July 1, 2023.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Homelessness is a fact and a growing problem. The Legislature should entertain all ideas to change the system and end the cycle of poverty. This legislation is an opportunity to investigate strategies to help students experiencing homelessness and adequately plan for their needs. It is hard to get statistics of how many students are experiencing homelessness. At Grays Harbor College, a recent survey indicated that 10 percent of students are experiencing unstable housing environments.

Homeless students have similar challenges to higher education that foster children do. Case managers can be very helpful, and campus based staff who work directly with a student can make a huge difference. Colleges are striving to support homeless students within the resources they already have. These strategies include things like food pantries and connecting students with providers. However, the appropriation should be equal to the outcome the Legislature would like to see.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Sells, prime sponsor; Erin Fraiser, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Jim Minkler, Grays Harbor College; Charles Adkins, The Evergreen State College; and Juliette Schindler Kelly, College Success Foundation.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.