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## Higher Education Committee

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### ESB 5731

**Brief Description:** Requiring acceptance of additional high school equivalency tests.

**Sponsors:** Senators Chase and Frockt.

#### Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Directs the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (State Board) to identify at least two high school equivalency tests that meet specific criteria.
- Requires the State Board to publicize the high school equivalency test options on its website and to high school equivalency test administrators.
- Changes high school equivalency certificate requirements to indicate that the holder has attained a score at or above the actual ability of current high school seniors.

**Hearing Date:** 2/21/18

**Staff:** Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

#### Background:

By taking and passing a series of high school equivalency tests, adults can demonstrate they have acquired the same level of knowledge as those who graduate from high school. A high school equivalency certificate is issued jointly by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (State Board) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Each year more than 15,000 state residents earn their high school equivalency certificate.

Washington's high school equivalency test is the nationally administered General Education Development (GED) test. In 2014 the GED was updated to align with the Common Core Standards and the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education. The new GED test is taken on a computer at an approved testing center. The passing score is 145, on a scale of 100 to 200, for each of the four subjects. Test takers may earn honors if they score 170 or higher on any subject. The GED test costs \$30 per subject, with a discount for retakes.

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*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.*

**Summary of Bill:**

A high school equivalency certificate is a certificate issued jointly by the State Board and OPSI that indicates that the holder has attained standard scores at or above the actual academic ability of current high school seniors.

The State Board must accept a high school equivalency certificate that is at least as rigorous as the 2013 GED in that 60 percent of high school seniors can pass the test. At least two options must be identified: a low-cost option and a test that does not require computer proficiency and is fairly normed to the actual academic ability of current high school seniors, such that at least 60 percent of high school seniors can pass the test. At least one test must also be identified that is appropriate for students who have been in the workforce, need a high school diploma for employment reasons, have been incarcerated, or were in the military.

The State Board must communicate the accepted test options to public and private test administrators. The State Board must also communicate to the Legislature and the public the number of students who have received a high school equivalency certificate during the prior month of each year by posting the information on its public website. The State Board must also post on its public website a norming study for every high school equivalency test confirming that the test is within the actual academic ability level of recent high school seniors. The norming study must be similar in scope and method to the norming studies of the 2002 and 2007 GED tests. Any test vendor that fails to provide a norming study meeting specific criteria is not permitted to test students in Washington.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available. New fiscal note requested on February 16, 2018.

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