

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6131

As of January 24, 2018

Title: An act relating to a waiver of tuition for state residents who are members of a federally recognized Indian tribe.

Brief Description: Providing a tuition waiver for state residents who are members of a federally recognized Indian tribe.

Sponsors: Senators McCoy, Hunt, Kuderer, Saldaña, Chase and Hasegawa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/23/18.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a 50 percent tuition waiver for students who are members of a federally recognized Indian tribe.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Kellee Gunn (786-7429)

Background: Tuition and Fees. There are six public baccalaureate institutions in this state, and 34 public community and technical colleges. Costs to attend college generally include tuition and fees, room and board, books, supplies, and transportation. Costs vary depending on the type of school attended and the number of courses taken.

Waivers. Public baccalaureate institutions and community and technical colleges may authorize certain tuition waivers, exemptions, or reductions in operating fees.

A total dollar amount of tuition and fee waivers awarded by any state university, regional university, or state college shall not exceed a percentage of total gross authorized operating fees revenue forecasted by the Economic and Revenue Forecast Council, or as revised by the Office of Financial Management. The limitations for waivers based on total gross authorized operating fees revenue are as follows:

- University of Washington—21 percent;

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- Washington State University—20 percent;
- Eastern Washington University—11 percent;
- Central Washington University—10 percent;
- The Evergreen State College—10 percent; and
- Community and Technical Colleges—as a whole—35 percent.

The waivers subject to the limitations include the following waivers:

- needy resident students;
- children and surviving spouses of certain fallen law enforcement officers, firefighters, and state patrol officers;
- students who are registered exclusively in first professional programs in medicine, dental medicine, veterinary medicine, doctor of pharmacy, or law, or who are registered exclusively in required courses in vocational preparatory programs;
- undergraduate or graduate students of foreign nations;
- academic exchange programs;
- those studying medicine with the Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, or Idaho Regional Medical Education Program or dentistry pursuant to contracts with the states of Utah and Idaho;
- faculty or graduate service appointments;
- non-specific, institutional waivers; and
- nonresident tuition fees for students from neighboring states and countries with reciprocal waiver programs.

The following waivers are not subject to the limitations described above:

- long-term unemployed or underemployed persons;
- certain residents 60 years of age or older;
- state employees and educational employees; and
- certain resident military or naval veterans—provided without state general fund support.

Waivers are authorized at Washington State University, Central Washington University, and Eastern Washington University for students accepted through the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education's Western Undergraduate Exchange. Those institutions may waive all or a portion of the difference between 50 percent of the resident tuition and fees amount and the nonresident tuition fees. They have additional limitations on the amount that may be spent on waivers as a percentage of their total gross authorized operating fees revenue.

Summary of Bill: Subject to the limitations on institutions for waivers, the governing bodies of the public baccalaureate institutions and community and technical colleges must waive 50 percent of the tuition and services and activities fees for students who meet all of the following criteria:

- are a member of a federally recognized Indian tribe; and
- domiciled within the state for a minimum of one year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This legislation was brought forward by a constituent and is modeled off other states in this country. Many states provide full-tuition waivers to members of federally recognized tribes. Inequality exists between tribal youth and their white peers. This bill will not fully bridge the gap, but is a step in the right direction.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator John McCoy, Prime Sponsor; Charles Adkins, Director of Legislative Affairs, Geoduck Student Union; Francisco Flores, Associated Students of Eastern Washington University.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.