
SENATE BILL 5731

State of Washington

65th Legislature

2017 Regular Session

By Senators Chase and Frockt

Read first time 02/06/17. Referred to Committee on Higher Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to acceptance of additional high school
2 equivalency tests; amending RCW 28B.50.536; creating new sections;
3 and declaring an emergency.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that there are many
6 reasons that adults who did not receive a high school diploma on the
7 traditional timeline now seek to earn one, including to gain better
8 employment and to continue their education. These adults dropped out
9 of high school for many reasons, such as becoming incarcerated or
10 joining the military, and now want a second chance at a diploma.

11 The legislature finds that before 2014, the high school
12 proficiency test was geared both toward those who might want to
13 transfer to college and those who might want to improve their
14 employment situation, and was normed so that sixty percent of high
15 school seniors could pass the test.

16 The legislature finds that a newly designed test, called the
17 Pearson general education (GED) test, was designed to align with the
18 rigorous common core standards rather than being a high school
19 equivalency test. It is not normed so that sixty percent of high
20 school seniors can pass it and therefore not appropriate for
21 returning adults who are not planning to go to college nor who need

1 highly rigorous academic training to achieve their employment goals.
2 In addition, the test is more expensive, requires an internet-
3 connected computer, and has fewer retest options.

4 The legislature finds that the significant decline in test takers
5 will likely have a significant impact on our state's human services
6 programs and criminal justice system.

7 Therefore, the legislature intends to ensure that adults who want
8 to earn a high school equivalency certificate have access to a test
9 option that is appropriate, low cost, and flexible. An increase in
10 the number of test takers will help achieve the state's goal that all
11 adults in Washington between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four
12 have a high school diploma or equivalent by 2023.

13 **Sec. 2.** RCW 28B.50.536 and 2013 c 39 s 9 are each amended to
14 read as follows:

15 (1) Subject to rules adopted by the state board of education
16 under RCW 28A.305.190, the state board for community and technical
17 colleges shall adopt rules governing the eligibility of persons
18 sixteen years of age and older to take a test to earn a high school
19 equivalency certificate, rules governing the administration of the
20 test, and rules governing the issuance of a high school equivalency
21 certificate to persons who successfully complete the test.

22 (2)(a) A high school equivalency certificate is a certificate
23 issued jointly by the college board and the office of the
24 superintendent of public instruction that indicates that the holder
25 has attained standard scores at or above the (~~minimum proficiency~~
26 ~~level prescribed by the college board on a high school equivalency~~
27 ~~test~~) actual academic ability of current high school seniors.

28 (b) The college board must identify and accept ((a)) high school
29 equivalency tests that ((is)) are at least as rigorous as the 2013
30 general educational development test in that sixty percent of high
31 school seniors can pass the test. The high school equivalency test
32 identified by the college board must cover reading, writing,
33 mathematics, science, and social studies subject areas.

34 (c) The college board must identify at least two test options, at
35 least one of which is low cost to the student and at least one test
36 option that does not require computer proficiency and is fairly
37 normed to the actual academic ability of current high school seniors
38 such that at least sixty percent of high school seniors can pass the
39 high school equivalency test. The college board must identify at

1 least one test option that is appropriate for students who have been
2 in the workforce, need a high school diploma for employment reasons,
3 have been incarcerated, or were in the military.

4 (3) High school equivalency certificates issued under this
5 section shall be issued in such form and substance as agreed upon by
6 the state board for community and technical colleges and
7 superintendent of public instruction.

8 (4) The college board must communicate the menu of accepted test
9 options under subsection (2) of this section to public and private
10 administrators of the high school equivalency tests.

11 (5) The college board must communicate to the legislature and the
12 public the number of students who have received a high school
13 equivalency certificate during the prior month of each year by
14 posting this information on a public page on its web site in order to
15 allow the legislature and the public to assess the fairness of the
16 process.

17 (6) The college board must also post on a public page on its web
18 site a norming study for every high school equivalency test
19 confirming that the test is within the actual academic ability level
20 of recent high school seniors. This norming study must be similar in
21 scope and methods to the norming studies of the 2002 and 2007 GED
22 tests. If a test vendor fails to provide such a norming study, that
23 vendor shall not be permitted to test students in Washington.

24 NEW SECTION. Sec. 3. This act may be known and cited as the GED
25 fairness act.

26 NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. This act is necessary for the immediate
27 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of
28 the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes
29 effect immediately.

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