

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2185

As Reported by House Committee On:
College & Workforce Development

Title: An act relating to assisting spouses and dependents of active duty military by ensuring affordable access to higher education.

Brief Description: Assisting spouses and dependents of active duty military by ensuring affordable access to higher education.

Sponsors: Representatives Leavitt, Van Werven, Bergquist, Eslick, Chambers, Dufault, Blake, Paul, Kirby, Chapman, Shewmake, Gildon, Frame, Slatter, Young, Orwall, Ormsby, Harris, Caldier, Irwin, Wylie, Doglio, Volz, Goodman and Hudgins.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

College & Workforce Development: 1/15/20, 1/29/20 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Modifies the definition of in-state resident for tuition purposes to include spouses and dependents of active duty military stationed in the state and who are accepted to a higher education institution before the military member is reassigned out of state, as long as the spouse or dependent enrolls for the term in which they were admitted.
- Allows residency to be decided at the time of acceptance for spouses and dependents of active duty military residing in Washington, but stationed in an Oregon border county, if the military member is reassigned out of the Oregon border county after acceptance.
- Restructures the residency statute for students who are active duty military and National Guard members and their spouses and dependents.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COLLEGE & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Entenman, Vice Chair; Leavitt, Vice Chair; Van Werven, Ranking Minority Member; Gildon, Assistant Ranking Minority

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Member; Graham, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Kraft, Mead, Paul, Pollet, Ramos, Rude, Sells, Slatter, Sutherland and Young.

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

Public higher education institutions use state residency to determine whether a student will be required to pay in-state or out-of-state tuition. Residency typically requires that a financially independent student establish a Washington domicile for one year before the first day of registration for a purpose other than educational. However, residency is also granted to other categories of students, including active duty military or National Guard members and their spouses and dependents who meet certain requirements. This includes students who are spouses or dependents of active duty military or National Guard members if the military or National Guard member is stationed in Washington. If the military or National Guard member is reassigned out of state, the spouse or dependent still qualifies for in-state residency if he or she is already enrolled and remains continuously enrolled in a degree program.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Students who are spouses or dependents of active duty military or the National Guard stationed in Washington qualify for in-state resident tuition if the student is accepted to a higher education institution before the military or National Guard member is reassigned out of state, as long as the student enrolls for the term the student was admitted. Residency at the time of acceptance is also granted to spouses or dependents of active duty military residing in Washington, but stationed in an Oregon border county, if the military member is reassigned out of the Oregon border county after acceptance.

The residency statute for students who are active duty military, National Guard, or the spouses or dependents of active duty military or National Guard is restructured.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill specifies that the student has to enroll in the term for which he or she was accepted in order to qualify for in-state residency. The residency determination at the time of acceptance was also added to those dependents of active duty military living in Washington, but stationed in an Oregon border county, who are reassigned out of state after the dependent gets accepted to an institution.

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) The bill essentially codifies current practices since many of the state's institutions are already doing this and are committed to honoring veterans and active duty military. The statute uses terminology such as "enrolled" or "continuously enrolled," but this leaves out students who have been accepted. A lot of permanent change-of-station relocations happen in the summer when acceptance letters are going out, and this would allow residency to be determined at the time of acceptance. In many cases, children may stay behind to attend an institution even though the parent was reassigned out of state. Paying out-of-state tuition can cause quality of life issues for military families. Spouses and dependents already sacrifice a lot, and anything that the state can do to make their lives easier is helpful.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Leavitt, prime sponsor; Tanja Struyck-Fogleman; Matthew Sutherland, Washington State University; Tammie Perreault, Department of Defense State Liaison Office; and Ruben Flores, Council of Presidents.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.