

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6142

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As of January 27, 2020

**Title:** An act relating to creating the Washington common application.

**Brief Description:** Creating the Washington common application.

**Sponsors:** Senators Liias, Randall, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Mullet, Nguyen, Stanford, Carlyle and Wilson, C.; by request of Lieutenant Governor.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/16/20.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Directs the Council of Presidents, in partnership with the Washington Student Achievement Council, to develop a uniform application for admissions to public baccalaureate institutions.
- Establishes minimum requirements for the Washington unified application.
- Requires the public baccalaureate higher education institutions to accept the Washington unified application.
- Allows all public baccalaureate institutions to adopt a preexisting common application including more than 100 intuitional participants, to satisfy the requirement to adopt the Washington unified application.

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**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**Staff:** Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

**Background:** Higher education institutions in Washington have authority to determine individual admissions policies and procedures. Some state systems, such as the University of California, have adopted a single systemwide undergraduate application for admission. Alternatively, some colleges and universities have opted-in to nationally recognized and standardized college application tools such as the Common App or the Coalition Application.

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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.*

College application fees for prospective students range from \$50 to \$80 at public colleges and universities in Washington State. Most institutions make application fee waivers available to students, with variability in income level required to obtain the waiver, and different processes for applying for the waiver.

**Summary of Bill:** The bill as referred to committee not considered.

**Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute):** The Council of Presidents (COP), in consultation with the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), must develop a uniform application for college admissions. The application tool must be online, with standardized questions, and no more than one unique essay question per institution. The unified application must include an application fee waiver process for low-income students. COP and WSAC may contract with a third-party vendor to develop, launch, and maintain the application tool.

COP, in coordination with WSAC, must develop a process for remitting revenue from application fees to the colleges or universities to which prospective students have applied.

The Washington unified application must be available for use beginning September 1, 2022.

Washington public baccalaureate institutions are required to accept the unified application beginning September 1, 2022. The institutions may not require any additional application materials beyond those required through the Washington unified application for general undergraduate admissions.

In lieu of the Washington unified application, the public baccalaureate institutions may satisfy the requirements of this act by adopting a preexisting online common application that includes more than 100 institutional participants.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 10, 2020.

**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 on Proposed Substitute:** PRO: These policies are ideas that can remove non-financial barriers to higher education and create equitable privilege. They have all been tested in other states. If someone goes to Wellesley or Columbia they do not have to fill out a separate application, they can apply to both through the common app. In our state you have to fill out an application for each college which is largely redundant. This may be prohibitive for students that do not have access to coaching and mentoring. This is designed to support the student in applying to more than one institution without the time and hoops required under current practices. Some barriers to access to higher education for first generation students include both the fees and ease of access in applying. This bill makes that process simpler. Institutions that adopt the common app have seen increases in applications and admissions. There are significant benefits to

students including simplifying the application process and the fee waiver process. I have always wanted to go to college but I struggled to find the funds to apply. I generally finished applications right at the deadline because in addition to school I work. In addition to each application I had to navigate separate applications for fee waivers. I appreciate that this bill would streamline that.

OTHER: The community and technical college system have a uniform application that they have used for years. We are supportive of the intent but want to find a solution to make this workable for our higher education partners. We are currently a member of the coalition app and our concerns on this bill are addressed if participation in that meets the requirements of the bill. We wholeheartedly agree with the intent of this bill and simplifying this process. You can apply to CWU in 15 minutes on your phone. We have increased applications for underrepresented student groups. We would be willing to participate in the coalition app or the common app. A lot of our concern is around the Washington unified application and the costs there. We want to make sure we can do this right.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Marko Liias, Prime Sponsor; Michelle Jimenez, Student, Washington World Fellows; Cyrus Habib, Office of the Lieutenant Governor; Mary Chikwinya, Director of Higher Education, Office of the Lieutenant Governor.

OTHER: Scott Copeland, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Joe Dacca, University of Washington; Steve DuPont, Central Washington University; Paul Francis, Council of Presidents; Juliette Schindler Kelly, College Success Foundation.

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