

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5497

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to extending voting authority to student members on the state board of education.

Brief Description: Extending voting authority to student members on the state board of education.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Wilson, C., Nobles, Conway, Das, Hunt, Lovelett, Lovick, Nguyen, Saldaña and Wellman; by request of State Board of Education).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/18/22, 2/22/22 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Extends voting authority to the two student members of the State Board of Education (SBE) except in matters directly relating to graduation requirement changes that apply to their school and graduating class.
- Makes corresponding changes to quorum requirements for the transaction of business by the SBE.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Berg, Bergquist, Callan, McCaslin, Ortiz-Self and Stonier.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McEntire, Rude and Steele.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Ybarra, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

With origins predating statehood, the 16-member State Board of Education (SBE) is comprised of five members elected by geographic regions by school directors, one member elected by private school directors, seven members appointed by the Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and two nonvoting student members. Eight voting members constitute a quorum for the transaction of business by the SBE.

The SBE has various duties and powers prescribed in statute, including:

- providing advocacy and strategic oversight of public education;
- establishing high school graduation requirements or equivalencies;
- identifying scores students must meet to achieve standard on statewide assessments;
- and
- accrediting private schools.

Summary of Bill:

Voting authority is extended to the two student members of the SBE, but they must excuse themselves from voting on matters directly relating to graduation requirement changes that apply to their school and graduating class.

With the change in voting membership, the number of SBE members constituting a quorum is increased from eight to nine. However, if one or more student member of the SBE is excused from voting on a matter directly relating to graduation requirement changes, eight voting members of the SBE constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill will give students the opportunity to share their opinions on the SBE

and will inspire students to engage local school boards. By expanding the student voice, students will be able to more accurately share student opinions and perspectives.

Demonstrating that the SBE values all voices starts with the SBE's operations. Giving students a vote will grant them access to voting authority that they have historically been excluded from. Extending voting rights to students will help the SBE to make thoughtful decisions for all students.

The two student members of the SBE represent more than 1 million students and they have been casting thoughtful advisory votes since 2019. Providing advisory vote authority was a good step, but it doesn't go far enough. Students need to have voice, purpose, and power. Students should be imagined as future colleagues and the student voice needs to be in the center of education conversations.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: McKenna Roberts and Pavan Venkatakrisnan, State Board of Education and Association of Washington Student Leaders; and Carissa Crum, The Washington State Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.