

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5497

As of January 12, 2022

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: Senators Wilson, C., Nobles, Conway, Das, Hunt, Lovelett, Lovick, Nguyen, Saldaña and Wellman; by request of State Board of Education.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/12/22.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Grants voting privileges to student members of the State Board of Education.
- Modifies the quorum requirement from eight voting members to nine members.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

Background: State Board of Education. The 16-member State Board of Education (SBE) is comprised of five members elected by geographic regions by school board directors, one member elected by private school directors, seven members appointed by the Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and two non-voting student members selected in a manner determined by the SBE.

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

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- providing advocacy and strategic oversight of public education;
- establishing high school graduation requirements or equivalencies;
- identifying scores students must meet to achieve standards on statewide assessments; and
- approving and accrediting private schools according to requirements established by the SBE.

All members except the student members are voting members. Eight voting members of the Board constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Summary of Bill: All members of the SBE are considered voting members, including student members. The quorum requirement for the transaction of business is changed from eight voting members to nine members.

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: Advocates are concerned that student voices are not authentically being heard in State Board of Education policy decisions. The involvement of students on the SBE is critical as educational policies should be student-centered. It is critical that future student members and all students have a strong voice in educational decisions. Students should be seen and heard as equals in educational decision-making. Giving students voting authority would allow them to be equal partners in education. This legislation would place pressure on local school boards to give greater recognition to student voices. Granting students voting authority would help students have greater trust in decisions made by the State Board of Education.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Claire Wilson, Prime Sponsor; Carissa Crum, Washington State Legislative Youth Advisory Council; Shreya Shaji, Legislative Youth Advisory Council; Sol Rabinovich; J. Lee Schultz, State Board of Education; McKenna Roberts, State Board of Education, Association of Washington Student Leaders; Pavan Venkatakrishnan, State Board of Education, Association of Washington Student Leaders; Jared Mason-Gere, Washington Education Association.

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