

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## HB 1536

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Clarifying requirements governing the withholding of high school diplomas.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Timmons, Harris, Bergquist, Ortiz-Self, Walen, Ramel, Morgan, Stonier, Gregerson, Ormsby and Paul.

**House Committee on Education**  
**Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education**

### **Background:**

A school district may withhold the diploma of a student who is responsible for losing or willfully cutting, defacing, or injuring the property of the district, a contractor of the district, an employee, or another student, until the student or the student's parent or guardian has paid for the loss or damage. School districts must adopt procedures to protect students' rights to due process before diplomas are withheld for these reasons.

Each school district that withholds diplomas because of lost or willfully damaged property by a student must publish and maintain the following information on its website:

- the number of diplomas withheld, by graduating class, during the previous three school years; and
- the number of students with withheld diplomas who were eligible for free or reduced-price meals during their last two years of enrollment in the school district.

If a student and the student's parent or guardian are unable to pay for the loss or willful damages, the school district must provide a program of community service for the student in lieu of the payment of monetary damages. Upon completion of community service, the student's diploma must be released.

### **Summary:**

The authority of school districts to withhold the diploma of a student who is responsible for

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lost or willfully damaged property of the district, a contractor of the district, an employee, or another student is limited to property loss or damages that exceed \$1,000. Additionally, school districts must release a withheld student's diploma at the earlier of either five years from the date of the student's graduation or until the amount owed is less than \$1,000.

Community service performed by the student in lieu of payment of monetary damages must be credited at the applicable local or state minimum wage, whichever is greater.

Information about withheld diplomas must be published and maintained in a location on school district websites that facilitate easy access to the information. When publishing required information about withheld diplomas, school districts must include information about the preceding five years and must annually update the data from the prior reporting year to reflect the permitted release of diplomas.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

House 74 21

Senate 28 21

**Effective:** July 23, 2023