

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## 2SSB 5048

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Postsecondary Education & Workforce

**Title:** An act relating to eliminating college in the high school fees.

**Brief Description:** Eliminating college in the high school fees.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Mullet, Rolfes, Billig, Hasegawa, Hawkins, Holy, Lias, Nguyen, Pedersen, Valdez, Wagoner, Warnick, Wellman and Wilson, C.).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Postsecondary Education & Workforce: 3/21/23, 3/24/23 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill  
(As Amended By Committee)**

- Requires institutions of higher education to provide enrollment and registration in College in the High School (CHS) courses at no cost to students in grades 9 through 12 at public high schools.
- Requires the Legislature to appropriate funds to fund CHS courses, at inflation-adjusted rates.
- Directs high schools that provide CHS courses to include information in the course catalog, and to notify parents and guardians by email and in beginning of the year packets, that there is no fee for students to enroll in CHS courses.
- Requires the parental and guardian notifications to also explain CHS credit transfer procedures.

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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION & WORKFORCE**

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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 part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Slatter, Chair; Entenman, Vice Chair; Reed, Vice Chair; Ybarra, Ranking Minority Member; Waters, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Hansen, Jacobsen, Klicker, Leavitt, McEntire, Paul, Pollet, Schmidt and Timmons.

**Staff:** Saranda Ross (786-7068)

**Background:**

College in the High School (CHS) is a dual credit program that provides college-level courses in high schools or high school environments to qualified students who are in or are eligible for enrollment in grades 9 through 12. Courses are taught at the high school by high school teachers or faculty from institutions of higher education with college curriculum and college textbooks, and with oversight by faculty and staff from institutions of higher education. Students can earn both high school and postsecondary credit by completing postsecondary-level courses with a passing grade. Programs are established in individual agreements between the schools and institutions of higher education.

An institution of higher education may charge tuition fees per credit to each student enrolled. The maximum per college credit tuition fee is \$65 per college credit, adjusted for inflation. These fees are not tuition or operating fees and may be retained by the institution of higher education.

A school district, charter school, or state-tribal compact school must award high school credit to students who successfully complete a CHS course. If no comparable course exists, the chief administrator determines how many credits to award before students enroll in the course. The awarded credit must be applied toward graduation requirements and subject area requirements, and must be included in the student's high school records and transcript. Similarly, institutions of higher education must award college credit to students who successfully complete a CHS course, must apply the credit toward general education requirements or degree requirements, and must include the credit in the student's college transcript.

High schools that offer CHS programs must provide general information about program fees to all students in grades 8 through 12 and their guardians, as well as provide certain program information in course catalogs. Included in that information is a notification that paying for college credit starts an official college transcript with the institution of higher education offering the CHS course, regardless of performance in the course, and that college credit earned upon successful completion of a CHS course may count only as elective credit if transferred to another institution of higher education.

State funding for CHS programs does not include funding for students who are in or eligible for enrollment in grades 9 or 10. For students in grades 11 or 12, funding is prioritized according to statute with a limit of ten credits, although a lower limit may be established in

the omnibus appropriations act. Subsidies may also be provided for students who meet financial aid requirements. The maximum annual number of subsidized credits that a student may receive through these provisions is limited to five, but the omnibus appropriations act may establish a lower limit. The Washington Dual Enrollment Scholarship Pilot Program, administered by the Washington Student Achievement Council, provides tuition assistance and covers apprenticeship materials for low-income students enrolled in one or more dual credit programs, including CHS courses.

Institutions of higher education are the state universities, the regional universities, The Evergreen State College, the community and technical colleges, and a public tribal college in Washington.

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### **Summary of Amended Bill:**

Beginning September 1, 2023, institutions of higher education must provide enrollment and registration in CHS courses at no cost for eligible students in the ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grades at public high schools. Course administration data must be submitted annually by October 15 to the Office of Financial Management and legislative fiscal staff.

Beginning with the 2023-25 Omnibus Operating Appropriation Act, the Legislature must pass an operating budget that appropriates state funding for CHS courses administered at public secondary schools. State appropriation shall be calculated using the total CHS courses administered in the prior academic year, funded at a rate of:

- \$6,000 per CHS course administered by a state university;
- \$5,500 per CHS course administered by a regional university or the state college; or
- \$3,500 per CHS course administered by a community or technical college.

Beginning with the fiscal year 2025, the rate per CHS course must be adjusted annually for inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index.

High schools that provide a CHS course must include information in the course catalog and notify parents and guardians by email and in beginning of the year packets that there is no fee for students to enroll.

The parental and guardian notifications must also explain that enrolling in a CHS course automatically starts an official college transcript with the institution of higher education offering the course regardless of student performance, and that college credit earned upon successful completion of a course may count only as elective credit if transferred to another institution of higher education.

Institutions of higher education offering CHS must:

- provide evidence of completion of each program course on the student's college transcripts;

- grant undergraduate college credit as appropriate and applicable to the student's degree requirements; and
- provide course equivalencies for CHS courses and policy for awarding credit on the institution's website.

The statute permitting institutions of higher education to charge students a per-credit tuition fee is repealed and the Washington Dual Enrollment Scholarship Pilot Program can no longer be awarded for CHS courses.

### **Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill:**

The amended bill requires high schools offering CHS courses to notify parents and guardians of students in grades 8 through 12 by email and in beginning of the year packets that: (a) there is no fee for students to enroll in CHS courses; (b) enrolling in a CHS course for college credit automatically starts an official college transcript with the institution of higher education offering the CHS course regardless of student performance in the course; and (c) that college credit earned upon successful completion of a program course may count only as elective credit if transferred to another institution of higher education. The amended bill also adds a citation to the CHS statute for clarification in section 1.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Amended 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) In the current CHS system, students pay roughly \$65 per college credit for five credit classes. This bill makes CHS free for all students, meets students where they are, leads with equity, and is more affordable than past proposals. Earning free college credit like this is not available anywhere else. College in the High School is a proven program that is very effective—it increases high school graduation rates, enrollment in college, and persistence in college.

Many students enroll in CHS but do not receive credit because they cannot pay the fees. Those are often the students who do not believe they can go to college, but nothing helps a student believe in themselves more than taking a college class to see what it is like and succeed further by receiving help to fill out the Federal Application for Federal Student Aid and Washington College Grant applications. The current system for CHS is a "rich get richer" scheme. Obtaining credit for coursework should not be gauged on a student's ability to pay.

The state's goal is for 70 percent of high school students to earn a postsecondary education by 2030 and this bill will help make that happen. However, a Washington Student Achievement Council report showed that postsecondary enrollment has been on a steady decline since 2013 and declined sharply due to COVID-19 with 59 percent of students enrolling in 2019 and only 50 percent of students enrolling in 2021. Nearly 70 percent of jobs in Washington require a postsecondary credential and students who graduate high school with college credit are more likely to enroll in college. College in the High School gives students an opportunity to start their postsecondary education sooner and reduces barriers to participation that typically impact underrepresented students of color and low-income students. To reduce barriers even further, transcript fees should be included in this bill as well. The University of Washington supports this bill because of what it can do for students despite the fact that the university will receive less revenue.

To allow institutions to negotiate and potentially offer cost savings to the state, the bill should establish the rates as maximums instead of fixed. There should also be language specific to the application of postsecondary credits, as the current language in the bill may potentially increase the number of elective credits that may be earned. But if the goal is to shorten the time to earning the credential, then the application of credits should be tailored to that. The bill also needs consideration around the fiscal reporting requirements to inform future policy and fiscal decisions.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) The funding formula in this bill is profoundly concerning, as it is not based on costs, which are broadly similar across two-year and four-year institutions, but is based on revenue. Because some institutions charge more for CHS now, they receive more under this bill. This puts community colleges at a long-term disadvantage. There are approximately 18 states that provide public funding for CHS and only two differentiate between two- and four-year schools and their funding formula. Utah, Montana, and other states have created a right of first refusal for community colleges offering CHS courses. If a high school wants to implement a CHS program, it is required to contact a nearby community college. The community college has 60 days to respond in writing. If that college is unable to support the course, then the high school can contract with any institution of higher education in the state. A recent national study found that equity impacts are magnified when community colleges are engaged. College in the High School increases college attendance rates by 17 points and over 90 percent of that gain was students who first attended community college. If community colleges are not engaged in the work, there is a risk of undermining the equity benefits that this bill attempts to create. Additionally, the bill should be amended to include the CHS programs at not-for-profit colleges—Gonzaga University, Seattle University, and Heritage University.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Senator Mark Mullet, prime sponsor; Tim Stetter, University of Washington in the High School; Steve DuPont, Central Washington

University; David Buri, Eastern Washington University; Natalya Yudkovsky, Washington State Parent Teacher Association; Riley Shepherd; Amanda Kost, University of Washington; Becky Wallace, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; Jeff Charbonneau, Zillah High School; Juliet Schindler, College Success Foundation; Bill Lyne, United Faculty of Washington State; and Arlen Harris, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

(Other) Michael Reese, Bellevue College; and Terri Standish-Kuon, Independent Colleges of Washington.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.