

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## E2SHB 1692

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As of February 16, 2024

**Title:** An act relating to increasing youth engagement in the legislative process by creating student advisory groups to examine issues important to youth.

**Brief Description:** Creating student advisory groups.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations (originally sponsored by Representatives Bergquist, Christian, Gregerson, Santos, Pollet, Macri and Simmons).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/8/24, 83-14.

**Committee Activity:** State Government & Elections: 2/16/24.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a Legislative District Student Council, composed of seven high school student members, in each legislative district to serve as nonpartisan advisory bodies, examine issues affecting youth and education, and make recommendations to legislators.
- Creates a nonpartisan Youth Civic Engagement Caucus, composed of one middle school student member from each legislative district, for the purpose of advising the Legislature on issues affecting youth and education.
- Requires the Washington State School Directors' Association to form a Student Representative Network composed of student school board representatives to examine issues important to youth and engage in the legislative process.
- Requires the Legislative Youth Advisory Council, in coordination with the Student Representative Network, to organize an annual day of youth civic education in Olympia.

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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.*

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

**Staff:** Greg Vogel (786-7413)

**Background:** Legislative Youth Advisory Council. The Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC) is a nonpartisan, youth-led committee of 22 student members created for the purpose of examining issues of importance to youth, including those related to education, employment, youth participation in state and municipal government, safe environments for youth, substance abuse, emotional and physical health, foster care, poverty, and youth access to services on a statewide and municipal basis. LYAC is responsible for:

- advising the Legislature and various study groups about proposed and pending legislation and policy matters relating to youth;
- conducting periodic seminars for its members regarding leadership, government, and the Legislature;
- accepting and soliciting grants and donations to support its activities; and
- reporting annually to the Legislature on its activities, including proposed legislation that implements recommendations of the LYAC.

Each year, the LYAC also organizes a day known as Action Day, when youth travel from across Washington to the state capitol in Olympia for the purposes of civic engagement and direct engagement with the legislative process.

The LYAC is student-led and co-administered by the Office of the Lieutenant Governor and the Washington State Leadership Board.

Washington State School Directors' Association. The Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) is a body consisting of all locally elected school board directors and school board members from each of Washington's school districts. WSSDA was created for the coordination of policymaking, control, and management among the school districts to increase the efficiency of the common school system. WSSDA has various responsibilities, which include:

- conducting studies and disseminating information in order to increase efficiency in local school board administration;
- providing advice and assistance to school boards;
- providing certain services upon request by a school board, including for specialized services, research information, and consultants to advise and assist school boards in particular problem areas;
- creating model policy and procedures for topics relating to waiving credit for high school graduation, nurturing a positive social and emotional school and classmate climate, implementing student discipline policy, and accommodating students with epilepsy or other seizure disorders; and
- developing cultural competency, diversity, equity, and inclusion standards and training for school director governance.

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is Washington's State education agency. The nonpartisan office is responsible for overseeing public kindergarten through 12th grade education, allocating funding, and implementing state laws regarding education.

**Summary of Bill:** Creation of Legislative District Student Councils. A Legislative District Student Council (Council) is created in each legislative district in Washington to serve as nonpartisan advisory bodies. The Councils are responsible for examining issues affecting youth and education and making recommendations to legislators on those issues. Council members are students in grades 9 through 12 who attend a public school, private school, or homeschool or students at a community or technical college. Model processes, programs, and duties for the Councils are to be developed by a statewide organization that provides leadership opportunities to students, as selected by OSPI. Each Council may not conduct more than four in-person meetings.

The organization selected by OSPI must contribute to the development of various aspects of the Council program. These include:

- the processes and procedures that may be used to set up each Council;
- an application and selection process that may be used to select student members to serve on the Council;
- model practices regarding increasing student engagement; and
- the distribution of information about participating in the Councils, including the application process and timeline.

Each Council has a maximum of seven members:

- one chair, selected by WSSDA;
- one vice chair, who is the Youth Civic Engagement Caucus member from the Council's respective legislative district;
- up to two student board representatives, selected by WSSDA, who attend a qualifying school that is located within that Council's legislative district; and
- at least three additional members who are under the age of 21 at the time of appointment and attend either a qualifying school or a community or technical college that is located within that Council's legislative district.

Initial Council chairs must be selected by October 1, 2025, by the organization identified by OSPI. Members are selected to two-year terms, initially by a committee consisting of the chairs of each Council. Initial members must be selected by November 15, 2025. The selection of subsequent members is the responsibility of each Council and must occur no later than October 1, 2027, and on October 1st every two years thereafter.

To the extent feasible, the members of each Council must attend either a qualifying school or a community or technical college that is located within their Council's district. However, if no students from that district apply, students attending either a qualifying school or a

community or technical college in an adjacent legislative district may be selected for membership. The process for selecting student members must take into consideration the balance of representation among the various grades, with at least one student being in grade 11 and one being in grade 12.

When engaging in outreach and recruiting efforts to educate students and schools about opportunities to participate in the Councils, and when creating an application and selection process, the Lieutenant Governor's Office, the organization selected by OSPI, and WSSDA must comply with the principles of the State Pro-Equity Anti-Racism Plan and Playbook as developed by the Office of Equity.

The organization selected by OSPI must, no later than December 31, 2025, submit a report to the Legislature detailing:

- the number of Councils established;
- the legislative district of each Council;
- a list of schools represented on Councils;
- grade levels represented on Councils; and
- the demographics of each Council.

Creation of the Student Representative Network. WSSDA must form a Student Representative Network (Network) consisting of student school board representatives to examine issues of importance to youth and engage in the legislative process. WSSDA must facilitate a connection between Network members and the legislators in their legislative district and provide Network members with learning opportunities about education policy. In legislative districts where there are no established student board representatives, WSSDA must communicate with the appropriate school districts to create awareness of the role and encourage participation. WSSDA must invite legislators to participate in the Network in an advisory capacity.

The Network's duties include:

- advising the Legislature and various study groups about proposed and pending legislation relating to matters impacting youth;
- developing and assembling resources for new and existing student board representatives;
- providing training, photos, and other content for WSSDA publications;
- collaborating with WSSDA standing committees, advisory committees, task forces, and caucuses as invited; and
- providing additional student voices at WSSDA events.

The Network, in consultation with WSSDA, must issue a report on December 1st of each year to the Legislature on the number of student board representatives in the state and the activities of the Network.

Creation of the Youth Civic Engagement Caucus. A middle school level Youth Civic

Engagement Caucus (YCEC) is created. The advisory responsibilities of the caucus shall mirror those of LYAC. OSPI must select a statewide organization that provides leadership opportunities to students to create model processes and procedures that may be used to establish and maintain the caucus. The model processes and procedures must be completed by September 1, 2025. The caucus's membership must, to the greatest extent possible, consist of one student in grades six through eight from each legislative district. The initial members of the caucus must be balanced between sixth and seventh grade students, with the sixth graders serving three-year terms and the seventh graders serving two-year terms. All students subsequently selected to the caucus must serve two-year terms. The caucus members serve as the vice chairs of the Council in their legislative district.

Other Provisions Related to Legislative Youth Advisory Council. LYAC, in coordination with the Network and the YCEC, must organize Action Day, the in-person annual day of youth civic education in Olympia, as well as an annual virtual town hall meeting in the three-month period preceding the commencement of the legislative session.

**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: The goal is to make sure more students are civically engaged. This bill would help students in every legislative district to have a voice, have more agency. There are studies linking the positive impacts of student civic engagement with the depth and breadth of academic, social, and emotional advancements. Evidence shows civically engaged students are more likely to be voters as adults and civically engaged members of society. Civic engagement is life saving work for students, getting us out of technology addiction and isolation and involved with something bigger than ourselves.

OTHER: We need to ensure that students with disabilities are adequately represented as part of this process.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Steve Bergquist, Prime Sponsor; Dr. Nyla Rosen, Institute for Community Leadership; James Layman, Association of Washington Student Leaders; Alexx Skelton; Kwabena Ledbetter, Student Rep Network of the Washington State School Directors' Association; Anjali Bergquist, Kennydale Elementary School; Fynn Manohchompoo.

OTHER: Michael Brunson.

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