

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2125

As Reported by House Committee On:
Postsecondary Education & Workforce

Title: An act relating to the eligibility of state-mandated benefits for contingent faculty at community and technical colleges.

Brief Description: Concerning the eligibility of state-mandated benefits for contingent faculty at community and technical colleges.

Sponsors: Representatives Ortiz-Self, Simmons, Reed, Jacobsen, Fosse, Nance, Reeves and Pollet.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Postsecondary Education & Workforce: 1/16/24, 1/19/24 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Adds part-time noninstructional workload to the calculation for determining eligibility for state-mandated benefits for part-time faculty at community and technical colleges.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Slatter, Chair; Entenman, Vice Chair; Reed, Vice Chair; Ybarra, Ranking Minority Member; Waters, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Jacobsen, Klicker, Leavitt, Nance, Paul, Pollet, Schmidt and Timmons.

Staff: Elizabeth Allison (786-7129).

Background:

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.

The state mandates certain benefits that employers must provide employees. These include insurance, retirement benefits, and sick leave. Part-time faculty at community and technical colleges can qualify for state-mandated benefits based on criteria established for each program.

Each community and technical college must report the names of eligible part-time academic employees who qualify for benefits to the appropriate agencies for purposes of determining eligibility. Qualification for part-time employees is assessed for each employee and reported to the other state agencies that administer the benefits, such as the Department of Retirement Systems for pension benefits or the Washington State Health Care Authority (Authority) for health benefits.

A full-time academic workload is the number of in-class teaching hours required to fulfill an employment obligation. The part-time academic workload is any percentage of full-time academic workload for which the part-time academic employee is not paid on the full-time academic salary schedule.

An academic employee is any teacher, counselor, librarian, or department head employed by a college district whether full-time or part-time. This does not include the chief administrative officer of each college district or any administrator in a college district.

The Public Employees' Benefits Board is required to design benefits and determine the terms and conditions of employee and retired or disabled school employee participation and coverage. The Authority determines eligibility and is responsible for processing complaints and appeals about coverage.

Faculty may establish or maintain eligibility for benefits by working for more than one institution.

Summary of Bill:

Qualification for benefits for part-time faculty is expanded to include part-time noninstructional workload performed by the part-time academic employee in addition to part-time academic workload.

Part-time noninstructional workload means the number of paid hours a part-time academic employee performs for the institution that is not considered in-class teaching hours or hours served in support of assigned in-class teaching hours, calculated as a percentage of a 40-hour workweek.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 11, 2024.

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) Community and technical colleges are so critical for many in the community and for people trying to reengage, get technical assistance, and a living-wage job. The impact of degrees across the state is so important. Not everyone can go to a four-year institution right away. At community and technical colleges, adjunct faculty get paid for their academic load. An adjunct may have benefits one quarter because they are teaching two classes and have no benefits the next quarter because they are teaching one class but doing other, non-academic activities. It is already hard enough to find adjunct faculty and it is important to make sure benefits are consistent for them. When part-time faculty eligibility was defined in the law, colleges did not rely on adjunct faculty to the extent that they do now. Part-time faculty taught a limited range of subjects, and the percentage of part-time faculty to full-time faculty was lower than it is now. Now there are more part-time faculty than full-time faculty, and those part-time faculty teach more than part-time despite being classified as such. Adjunct faculty are valuable to community and technical colleges. The volume of noninstructional workload is high and does not currently count toward benefits. An example of noninstructional workload is Guided Pathways. This bill closes a loophole that colleges have been using to deny benefits to adjunct faculty. Work is work, and the distinction between instructional and noninstructional workload is outdated.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Lillian Ortiz-Self, prime sponsor; Karen Strickland, American Federation of Teachers Washington; and Sue Nightingale, Washington Education Association Higher Education.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: Tracey Higgins and Jaqui Cain, American Federation of Teachers Washington.