
ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2626

State of Washington

63rd Legislature

2014 Regular Session

By House Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Seaquist, Haler, Reykdal, Gregerson, Pollet, and Moscoso)

READ FIRST TIME 02/05/14.

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing statewide educational attainment
2 goals; creating new sections; and providing an expiration date.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that increasing
5 educational attainment is vital to the well-being of Washingtonians and
6 critical to the health of the state's economy. Education opens doors
7 to gainful employment, higher wages, increased job benefits, improved
8 physical health, and increased civic engagement. Educated workers who
9 are capable of competing for high-demand jobs in today's global economy
10 sustain existing employers and attract new businesses. These
11 individuals with competitive higher education credentials directly
12 contribute to the state's economic growth and vitality.

13 (2) The legislature finds that workforce and labor market
14 projections estimate that by 2020 the vast majority of jobs in
15 Washington will require at least a high school diploma or equivalent
16 and seventy percent of those jobs will also require some postsecondary
17 education.

18 (3) The legislature finds that current levels of educational
19 attainment are inadequate to address the educational needs of the

1 state. In 2013, eighty-nine percent of Washington adults ages twenty-
2 five to forty-four had a high school diploma or equivalent, and less
3 than fifty percent of Washington adults ages twenty-five to forty-four
4 have a postsecondary credential. Noting the prolonged impact of a
5 major economic recession, the legislature recognizes that the state's
6 higher education system must now prepare to expand degree and
7 certificate programs to meet the state's needs as reflected in the new
8 goals adopted in this act. Accordingly, the legislature finds that a
9 new strategy for achieving system growth, high quality, and increased
10 efficiency is needed to meet the goals recommended by the student
11 achievement council.

12 (4) The legislature finds seventy-four percent of families in
13 Washington have incomes below the level considered able to afford the
14 cost of attending a community college, and seventy-eight to eighty-two
15 percent of families have incomes below the level considered able to
16 afford one student attending a regional university or research
17 university, respectively. As the state reduced its support for
18 institutions of higher education, the cost of tuition has risen to be
19 over twenty percent of median household income for the state at its
20 research institutions, which is an obstacle to access. Therefore, the
21 legislature finds that it is vital for the student achievement council
22 to adopt a goal of what constitutes affordable tuition, recognizing
23 that tuition is often only half the cost of attending an institution of
24 higher education.

25 (5) The legislature notes that the primary mission of the student
26 achievement council is to propose to the governor and the legislature
27 goals for increasing educational attainment in Washington, including
28 recommending the resources necessary to achieve the goals and
29 monitoring progress toward meeting the goals.

30 (6) A fundamental principle of the state is that the cost of
31 tuition, where an individual resides in the state, and economic,
32 racial, or other status of an individual, should not be a barrier for
33 any resident to obtain a postsecondary certificate or degree from an
34 institution of higher education.

35 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** Following recommendations in the higher
36 education ten-year roadmap in RCW 28B.77.003 and 28B.77.020, the

1 legislature declares that the statewide educational attainment goals
2 required to meet the societal and economic needs of the future are as
3 follows:

4 (1) All adults in Washington ages twenty-five to forty-four will
5 have a high school diploma or equivalent by 2023;

6 (2) At least seventy percent of Washington adults ages twenty-five
7 to forty-four will have a postsecondary credential by 2023; and

8 (3) The cost of tuition, where an individual resides in the state,
9 economic status, race or ethnicity, or other status of an individual,
10 shall not be a barrier for any resident to obtain a postsecondary
11 certificate or degree from an institution of higher education.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** By December 1, 2014, the student achievement
13 council shall develop and adopt strategies that will enable the state
14 to achieve each of the goals in section 2 of this act and report back
15 to the governor and the legislature with specific recommendations for
16 those strategies that require legislation or specific appropriations,
17 including timelines and benchmarks towards achieving each goal. This
18 information shall be included in the strategic action plan required in
19 RCW 28B.77.020.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** This act expires July 1, 2016.

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