

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5646

As of February 12, 2013

Title: An act relating to high school equivalency certificates.

Brief Description: Concerning high school equivalency certificates.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Frockt, Bailey, Shin, Hasegawa and Chase; by request of State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/12/13.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: Katherine Taylor (786-7434)

Background: The General Education Development (GED) test was created in 1942. Its original purpose was to provide soldiers who did not have a high school diploma with a quick way to earn a high school credential. Today, the GED is a group of five subject tests, including language arts writing, social studies, science, language arts reading, and mathematics, which when passed, certify that the taker has high school level academic skills. The person is then awarded a certificate of educational competence. In 2012, the GED Testing Service merged with a for-profit company to create a new computer-based test. The term GED is trademarked.

The State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) is led by a nine-member Governor-appointed board responsible for administering the Community and Technical College Act and providing coordination for Washington's system of 34 public community and technical colleges. SBCTC also oversees the GED testing program for Washington. Due to increased company costs, SBCTC changed its GED testing charges in 2012 from \$75 to \$150. In 2012, 22,626 people took the GED in Washington.

Summary of Bill: The State Board of Education must adopt rules governing the eligibility of a person between 16 years of age and under 19 years of age to take a test to earn a high school equivalency certificate, instead of the GED. The certificate is now referred to as a high school equivalency certificate instead of a certificate of educational competence.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

SBCTC must adopt rules governing the eligibility of persons 16 years of age and older to take a test to earn a high school equivalency certificate, instead of the GED; rules governing the administration of the test; and rules governing the issuance of a high school equivalency certificate, to persons who successfully complete the test.

Statutes including but not limited to those regarding:

- foster youth,
- ocularists/eye prostheses professionals employment,
- alternative education service providers,
- disengaged youth,
- education Centers,
- private vocational schools,
- the Passport to College Promise Program,
- the Washington Promise Scholarship Program,
- Opportunity Expansion Program,
- chief of police or marshal employment,
- Department of Correction programs,
- public employment,
- childcare worker employment,
- adult family home provider employment,
- food stamps, and
- Washington Workfirst Temporary Assistance for Needy Families,

are amended to change requirements for successfully completing the GED or receiving a general equivalency degree to the requirement for a high school equivalency certificate. In all cases, references to the GED are changed to references to a high school equivalency certificate.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: We need to change the term GED to high school equivalency test or certificate. It will make it cheaper for people to take the test. GED is trademarked, a specific vendor, and for-profit and therefore should be removed from our statutes. Changing the testing term will create more flexibility in the test that can be given.

Persons Testifying: PRO: John Kurr, SBCTC.