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CERTIFICATION OF ENROLLMENT

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 1121

Chapter 7, Laws of 2021

67TH LEGISLATURE

2021 REGULAR SESSION

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS--EMERGENCY WAIVERS

EFFECTIVE DATE: March 2, 2021

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 1121

Passed Legislature - 2021 Regular Session

State of Washington -- 67th Legislature -- 2021 Regular Session

By Representatives Santos, Ybarra, Ortiz-Self, Gregerson, Paul, Stonier, Pollet, Bergquist, and Harris-Talley; by request of State Board of Education

Prefiled 01/08/21. Read first time 01/11/21. Referred to Committee on Education.

AN ACT Relating to the waiver of certain high school graduation requirements in times of emergency; amending RCW 28A.655.250; adding a new section to chapter 28A.230 RCW; creating a new section; and declaring an emergency.

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

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. (1) The legislature recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic illuminated the need for an emergency waiver program that would prevent students from being unduly impacted by unforeseen disruptions to coursework and assessments that are beyond the student's control. The legislature finds that a new and ongoing emergency waiver program would ensure the state is better prepared to respond to future emergencies at both the state and local levels.

(2) Therefore, the legislature intends to provide the state board of education with the authority to establish an emergency waiver program to allow school districts to waive certain graduation requirements on an individual student basis after the district makes a good faith effort to help the student meet the requirements. The legislature further intends for the emergency waiver program to be administered in an equitable manner and in furtherance of the opportunity for students to graduate ready for success in postsecondary education, gainful employment, and civic engagement, and equipped with the skills to be a lifelong learner, consistent with the purpose of the high school diploma as established in RCW 28A.230.090(1).

NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. A new section is added to chapter 28A.230 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Beginning with the class of 2020, the state board of education may authorize school districts to grant individual student

emergency waivers from credit and subject area graduation requirements established in RCW 28A.230.090, the graduation pathway requirement established in RCW 28A.655.250, or both if:

(a) The student's ability to complete the requirement was impeded due to a significant disruption resulting from a local, state, or national emergency;

(b) The school district demonstrates a good faith effort to support the individual student in meeting the requirement before considering an emergency waiver;

(c) The student was reasonably expected to graduate in the school year when the emergency waiver is granted; and

(d) The student has demonstrated skills and knowledge indicating preparation for the next steps identified in their high school and beyond plan under RCW 28A.230.090 and for success in postsecondary education, gainful employment, and civic engagement.

(2) A school district that is granted emergency waiver authority under this section shall:

(a) Maintain a record of courses and requirements waived as part of the individual student record;

(b) Include a notation of waived credits on the student's high school transcript;

(c) Maintain records as necessary and as required by rule of the state board of education to document compliance with subsection (1)(b) of this section;

(d) Report student level emergency waiver data to the office of the superintendent of public instruction in a manner determined by the superintendent of public instruction in consultation with the state board of education;

(e) Determine if there is disproportionality among student subgroups receiving emergency waivers and, if so, take appropriate corrective actions to ensure equitable administration. At a minimum, the subgroups to be examined must include those referenced in RCW 28A.300.042(3). If further disaggregation of subgroups is available, the school district shall also examine those subgroups; and

(f) Adopt by resolution a written plan that describes the school district's process for students to request or decline an emergency waiver, and a process for students to appeal within the school district a decision to not grant an emergency waiver.

(3)(a) By November 1, 2021, and annually thereafter, the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall provide the data reported under subsection (2) of this section to the state board of education.

(b) The state board of education, by December 15, 2021, and within existing resources, shall provide the education committees of the legislature with a summary of the emergency waiver data provided by the office of the superintendent of public instruction under this subsection (3) for students in the graduating classes of 2020 and 2021. The summary must include the following information:

(i) The total number of emergency waivers requested and issued, by school district, including an indication of what requirement or requirements were waived. Information provided in accordance with this subsection (b)(i) must also indicate the number of students in the school district grade cohort of each student receiving a waiver; and

(ii) An analysis of any concerns regarding school district implementation, including any concerns related to school district demonstrations of good faith efforts as required by subsection (1)(b) of this section, identified by the state board of education during its review of the data.

(4) The state board of education shall adopt and may periodically revise rules for eligibility and administration of emergency waivers under this section. The rules may include:

(a) An application and approval process that allows school districts to apply to the state board of education to receive authority to grant emergency waivers in response to an emergency;

(b) Eligibility criteria for meeting the requirements established in subsection (1) of this section;

(c) Limitations on the number and type of credits that can be waived; and

(d) Expectations of the school district regarding communication with students and their parents or guardians.

(5) For purposes of this section:

(a) "Emergency" has the same meaning as "emergency or disaster" in RCW 38.52.010. "Emergency" may also include a national declaration of emergency by an authorized federal official.

(b) "School district" means any school district, charter school established under chapter 28A.710 RCW, tribal compact school operated according to the terms of state-tribal education compacts authorized under chapter 28A.715 RCW, private school, state school

established under chapter 72.40 RCW, and community and technical college granting high school diplomas.

Sec. 3. RCW 28A.655.250 and 2019 c 252 s 201 are each amended to read as follows:

(1)(a) Beginning with the class of 2020, except as provided in section 2 of this act, graduation from a public high school and the earning of a high school diploma must include the following:

(i) Satisfying the graduation requirements established by the state board of education under RCW 28A.230.090 and any graduation requirements established by the applicable public high school or school district;

(ii) Satisfying credit requirements for graduation;

(iii) Demonstrating career and college readiness through completion of the high school and beyond plan as required by RCW 28A.230.090; and

(iv) Meeting the requirements of at least one graduation pathway option established in this section. The pathway options established in this section are intended to provide a student with multiple pathways to graduating with a meaningful high school diploma that are tailored to the goals of the student. A student may choose to pursue one or more of the pathway options under (b) of this subsection, but any pathway option used by a student to demonstrate career and college readiness must be in alignment with the student's high school and beyond plan.

(b) The following graduation pathway options may be used to demonstrate career and college readiness in accordance with (a)(iv) of this subsection:

(i) Meet or exceed the graduation standard established by the state board of education under RCW 28A.305.130 on the statewide high school assessments in English language arts and mathematics as provided for under RCW 28A.655.070;

(ii) Complete and qualify for college credit in dual credit courses in English language arts and mathematics. For the purposes of this subsection, "dual credit course" means a course in which a student qualifies for college and high school credit in English language arts or mathematics upon successfully completing the course;

(iii) Earn high school credit in a high school transition course in English language arts and mathematics, an example of which includes a bridge to college course. For the purposes of this subsection (1)(b)(iii), "high school transition course" means an English language arts or mathematics course offered in high school where successful completion by a high school student ensures the student college-level placement at participating institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016. High school transition courses must satisfy core or elective credit graduation requirements established by the state board of education. A student's successful completion of a high school transition course does not entitle the student to be admitted to an institution of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016;

(iv) Earn high school credit, with a C+ grade, or receiving a three or higher on the AP exam, or equivalent, in AP, international baccalaureate, or Cambridge international courses in English language arts and mathematics; or receiving a four or higher on international baccalaureate exams. For English language arts, successfully completing any of the following courses meets the standard: AP English language and composition literature, macroeconomics, microeconomics, psychology, United States history, world history, United States government and politics, or comparative government and politics; or any of the international baccalaureate individuals and societies courses. For mathematics, successfully completing any of the following courses meets the standard: AP statistics, computer science, computer science principles, or calculus; or any of the international baccalaureate mathematics courses;

(v) Meet or exceed the scores established by the state board of education for the mathematics portion and the reading, English, or writing portion of the SAT or ACT;

(vi) Meet any combination of at least one English language arts option and at least one mathematics option established in (b)(i) through (v) of this subsection (1);

(vii) Meet standard in the armed services vocational aptitude battery; and

(viii) Complete a sequence of career and technical education courses that are relevant to a student's postsecondary pathway, including those leading to workforce entry, state or nationally approved apprenticeships, or postsecondary education, and that meet either: The curriculum requirements of core plus programs for aerospace, maritime, health care, information technology, or construction and manufacturing; or the minimum criteria identified in RCW 28A.700.030. Nothing in this subsection (1)(b)(viii) requires a student to enroll in a preparatory course that is approved under RCW 28A.700.030 for the purposes of demonstrating career and college readiness under this section.

(2) While the legislature encourages school districts to make all pathway options established in this section available to their high school students, and to expand their pathway options until that goal is met, school districts have discretion in determining which pathway options under this section they will offer to students.

(3) The state board of education shall adopt rules to implement the graduation pathway options established in this section.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately.

Passed by the House January 27, 2021.

Passed by the Senate February 16, 2021.

Approved by the Governor March 2, 2021.

Filed in Office of Secretary of State March 2, 2021.

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