

SB 668 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

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Meeting Dates: 2/6

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure expands higher education tuition waivers for children, spouses, and unremarried surviving spouses of Purple Heart recipients, and of disabled and killed service members. The measure adds eligibility for service members with disability ratings of 80 – 100, and expands the waiver’s use to community colleges; vocational programs; and associate degrees. It prohibits the amount of tuition waived from being reduced by specified aid, awards, grants, and scholarships. It declares an emergency and is effective on passage.

Fiscal impact: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued

Revenue impact: May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Existing statute requires eligible public universities to waive tuition for children, a spouse, or an unremarried surviving spouse of those who received a Purple Heart in 2001 or later, or members of the Armed Forces of the United States who are 100 percent disabled as the result of military service, or who died as a result of such disability or while on active duty. The waiver applies to baccalaureate or master’s degrees, and can be reduced by the amount of certain aid, awards, grants, or scholarships the student receives.

The Purple Heart is presented to service members injured or killed in the line of duty. The United States Department of Veterans’ Affairs (USDVA) estimates there are 1.8 million Purple Heart recipients. The USDVA pays monthly [disability benefits](#) to qualifying veterans. The amount is based on a disability rating, which is calculated based on the severity of the condition. The rating is expressed as a percentage representing how much the disability decreases overall health and ability to function.

Senate Bill 668 reduces the disability requirement from 100 to 80 percent disabled and allows those service members to receive the waiver, and expands the waiver to community colleges, vocational programs, and associate’s degrees.