

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESHB 1131

C 314 L 07

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Creating the passport to college promise pilot program.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Dunshee, Haler, Kenney, Fromhold, Priest, Roberts, Jarrett, Kagi, Hunt, McDermott, Haigh, Ormsby, Chase, Wallace, Hudgins, Schual-Berke, Simpson, Conway, Morrell, Moeller and Santos).

House Committee on Higher Education

House Committee on Appropriations

Senate Committee on Higher Education

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

The results of numerous studies indicate that former foster youth face greater hurdles in adulthood compared to those who were never in foster care. For example, former foster youth graduate from high school at a lower rate than their non-foster care peers. Former foster youth also attend post-secondary education at a lower rate and, if they do attend, have much lower graduation rates. Former foster youth are also more likely to experience homelessness, unemployment, and incarceration than youth who were never in foster care.

Washington has taken a number of steps to help former foster youth successfully make the transition from foster care to post-secondary education and adulthood. In 2005, the Legislature created an endowed scholarship program for financially needy foster youth and former foster youth ages 16 to 23 years who had been in the state's foster care system six months or longer since turning 14 years old. The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) publicizes and promotes the program to eligible students with the assistance of an advisory board. The amount of an award may not exceed the student's financial need. The HECB anticipates making the first awards in the 2008-2009 academic year.

In 2005, the duties of the Children's Administration Oversight Committee on Education of Foster Youth were expanded to include promotion of opportunities for foster youth to participate in post-secondary education or training. The HECB, when making awards of State Need Grants, was directed to give consideration to former foster youth.

In 2006, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) was authorized to allow up to 50 youth in foster care reaching 18 years of age to stay in foster or group care so they could participate in or complete a post-high school academic or vocational program. In 2007 and 2008, 50 additional youth per year may be permitted to continue to remain in foster or group

care after reaching the age of 18 to complete post-high school academic or vocational programs.

In addition to Washington's efforts, private sector organizations also recognize the need to expand post-secondary opportunities for former foster youth. In 2001, former Governor Gary Locke established the Governor's Scholarship for Foster Youth. The scholarship is managed by the College Success Foundation (formerly called the Washington Education Foundation). Between 20 and 30 scholarships are awarded annually, with awards ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000 per year, depending on the recipient's needs. Scholarships can be renewed for up to four additional years.

Summary:

The HECB is directed to implement a six-year pilot program to provide supplemental college scholarships to former foster care youth. To be eligible for a scholarship, a student must have been emancipated from foster care after having spent at least one year in foster care since his or her sixteenth birthday. A student must also be a Washington resident enrolled at least half-time in a college in Washington, make satisfactory academic progress, not already have a bachelor's or professional degree, and not be pursuing a degree in theology. An eligible student may receive a scholarship for up to five years or until the student's twenty-sixth birthday, whichever occurs first.

The amount of the scholarships will equal the difference between a student's financial need and the amount the student receives through public and private grants, scholarships, and waiver assistance, including a self-help amount. However, scholarships will not exceed the amount of resident undergraduate tuition and fees at the highest-priced public institution.

The HECB, with input from the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), must develop a website and outreach program to provide information to foster youth about higher education.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) must develop procedures to identify eligible students. The DSHS must also contract with at least one non-governmental entity to develop and implement a plan to help foster youth plan for and transition into higher education.

The HECB must provide a status report to the Legislature by January 2008, and, along with the SBCTC, must submit reports to the Legislature by December of 2009 and 2011. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy must evaluate the pilot program and report to the Legislature by December 2012.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	81	16	
Senate	47	2	(Senate amended)
House	78	16	(House concurred)

Effective: July 22, 2007