
Higher Education Committee

HB 1779

Brief Description: Creating the GET ready for math and science scholarship program.

Sponsors: Representatives Wallace, Dunn, Haigh, Kenney, Hasegawa, B. Sullivan, McDermott, Takko, Roberts, P. Sullivan, Fromhold, Quall, Simpson, Lantz, Hudgins, Kagi, Santos, Ormsby and Morrell.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the GET Ready for Math and Science Scholarship program, which will provide conditional scholarships to eligible undergraduate students who major in math, science, or a related field and agree to work in Washington in a math, science or related occupation for at least three years after graduation.

Hearing Date: 2/5/07

Staff: Sarah Ream (786-7303).

Background:

Need for degrees in math and science

The percentage of students majoring in math, science, and engineering has declined over at least the past decade, despite the fact that job opportunities in these fields continue to be strong. The state has recognized the need to increase the number of students majoring in math, science and engineering. For example, the 2006 Supplemental Operating Budget provided about \$3.7 million for math and science enrollments at the University of Washington and Washington State University. The 2006 budget also included a \$500,000 appropriation to provide additional scholarships for students studying to become teachers in, among other fields, secondary math and science.

As part of the Washington Learns effort, the need for Washington's colleges and universities to produce more graduates in high demand fields, particularly mathematics and science, was acknowledged. The Washington Learns final report concluded that more students need to major in math and science. To provide incentives for students to do so, the Washington Learns report

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recommended creating scholarships to encourage low- and middle-income students who show an interest in math and science to major in those fields in college.

Guaranteed Education Tuition (GET) Program

Washington's Advanced College Tuition Payment Program—known as the GET Program—was created in 1998 as Washington's prepaid college tuition program. The GET Program allows purchasers to buy tuition units at current prices for use at a later date. These funds are invested by the State Investment Board and the purchaser is guaranteed that one year's worth of units purchased now will be worth one year's worth of public university tuition in the future.

Summary of Bill:

The GET Ready for Math and Science Scholarship Program is created. The program will provide college scholarships for students who:

- (1) score a "4" ("Advanced") on the 10th grade Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in either math or science;
- (2) have a family income no greater than 125 percent of the median family income in Washington at the time they apply for the scholarship and for up to the two previous years;
- (3) agree to major in a math, science, or related field;
- (4) make a commitment to work for at least three years in Washington in a math, science, or related field.

The scholarships can be used at any public or private accredited college or university in Washington. However, the maximum annual scholarship amount cannot be more than the annual cost of undergraduate tuition and fees at the University of Washington.

The scholarship program will be administered by a private non-profit organization. The non-profit organization and the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) will approve the undergraduate programs and majors offered in Washington in math, science, or a related field that qualify a student for a scholarship. The HECB will post the list of these programs and majors on its website.

If a student receives a scholarship and then (1) does not graduate from college, (2) switches to a major not in math, science, or related field, or (3) does not work in a math, science or a related field in Washington for at least three years after graduation, the student will be required to pay back some or all of the scholarship funds received.

The HECB will buy tuition units from the state's Guaranteed Education Tuition Program (Washington's prepaid college tuition program) to be used for the GET Ready for Math and Science scholarships.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 2, 2007.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.