
Higher Education Committee

HB 1882

Brief Description: Implementing Washington learns higher education recommendations.

Sponsors: Representatives Wallace, Moeller, Haigh, McDermott, Kagi, Roberts, O'Brien, Kenney, Hurst and Ormsby.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Implements Washington Learns tuition and financial aid recommendations.

Hearing Date: 2/8/07

Staff: Jennifer Thornton (786-7111).

Background:

Legislation enacted in 2005 created a comprehensive education and finance study covering early learning, K-12, and higher education. This effort, known as Washington Learns, was comprised of a steering committee chaired by the Governor and advisory committees for each education sector. The Washington Learns final report, a culmination of the 18 month study, was completed in November 2006.

HB 1641 was requested by the Governor, to implement the early learning, K-12 and higher education recommendations of Washington Learns. HB 1882 includes five of the six higher education recommendations of the omnibus Washington Learns bill.

Summary of Bill:

Statewide Tuition Policy: Tuition increases for resident students are capped at 7 percent per year between the 2007-08 academic year and the 2016-17 academic year. A state goal is adopted that total per student funding levels (from state appropriations plus tuition and fees) are at least the 60th percentile of total per student funding at similar institutions in the Global Challenge States. Without reducing enrollment levels below FY 2007 budgeted levels, the Office of Financial Management will establish a funding trajectory to reach this goal for each four-year institution and the community and technical college system.

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.

Washington Learns Scholarship: The scholarship program is established to encourage high school graduation and college completion among students who are low-income and/or come from families where neither parent earned a baccalaureate degree. The maximum scholarship for students attending public institutions is the cost of tuition, books and fees minus state and institutional aid students receive to cover these costs. The maximum award for students attending private four-year institutions will be based on the average award at public research universities. At private career schools, the maximum award will be based on the average award at public community and technical colleges.

To be eligible, students must sign a pledge while in their seventh or eighth grade showing a commitment to graduate from high school with at least a "C" average and no felony convictions. Students must be eligible for free or reduced lunch, or come from a family where neither parent earned a baccalaureate degree. The student must then apply and meet criteria for the scholarship while in high school.

GET Ready for Math and Science Scholarship: The program will be administered by a public-private partnership, with scholarships provided in the form of purchased GET units. Students who achieve level four on the math or science Washington State Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in the 10th grade and enroll in qualified math and science-related programs at post-secondary institutions in Washington are eligible to apply. Students must also declare the intent to work in Washington for at least three years after college graduation in an occupation related to the field of study, and have a family income at or below 125 percent of the state median family income (MFI).

The maximum scholarship amount will equal tuition and mandatory fees at a public research university, and may not exceed 180 quarter credits or the semester equivalent. Repayment may be required for students who do not meet the work requirement after graduation.

Regional Opportunity Grants: The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) will develop and implement the Regional Opportunity Grant Program, providing funding for community and technology students for tuition, fees, books and supplies for up to 45 quarter credits. Students must be eligible for in-state tuition and be at or below the state MFI. Students must enroll in a program designated as a "regional Opportunity Grant-eligible field of study" by the SBCTC in partnership with business, labor, and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

Expanding Eligibility for the State Need Grant Program: This changes the minimum enrollment requirement for eligibility for the State Need Grant from half-time to three credits. All other eligibility criteria remain the same. It also reduces the enrollment requirement from six to three credits for students to qualify for loans or locally administered financial aid programs from institutional financial aid funds.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 1, 2007.

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