

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1693

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**As Reported By House Committee On:**  
Higher Education

**Title:** An act relating to higher education scholarships.

**Brief Description:** Creating the Washington's promise scholarship program.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Kenney, Carlson, Tokuda, Ogden, Santos and Conway; by request of Governor Locke.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Higher Education: 2/23/99, 1/28/00, 2/1/00, 2/3/00 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Establishes the Washington promise scholarship that awards eligible students up to two years of tuition at the public community college rate.
- Students must meet both merit and financial requirements for eligibility.
- Students who are graduates of public and private schools, as well as those receiving home-based instruction, qualify if they meet the merit and financial requirements.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Carlson, Republican Co-Chair; Kenney, Democratic Co-Chair; Lantz, Democratic Vice Chair; Dunn; Edmonds; Esser and Gombosky.

**Staff:** Erika Prager (786-7120).

**Background:**

Currently Washington provides merit-based scholarships for undergraduate higher education from state funds. These scholarships include the Washington Award for Vocational Excellence (WAVE) and the Washington Scholars Program. Each of these awards are presented to up to three students per legislative district based on vocational merit in the case of the WAVE program, and upon academic merit for Washington Scholars.

The Legislature appropriated \$9 million in the 1999-2001 budget to the Higher Education Coordinating Board to establish the Washington promise scholarship program. The program is subject to conditions and limitations, including those related to administration, eligibility, and uses of scholarship funds.

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### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The Washington promise scholarship is established. This merit and need-based scholarship, implemented by the Higher Education Coordinating Board, is awarded to students based on two specific eligibility criteria. The award consists of two years of tuition at the community college full-time tuition rate.

*Eligibility.* Eligibility is based on academic merit and student family income limit.

#### Academic merit

Before the K-12 certificate of mastery is required, students graduating in 2001 or 2002 from public or approved private high schools whose class rank is within the top 15 percent of their high school graduating class are eligible. Beginning with the 2003 graduating class, students who pass the Washington assessment of student learning on their first attempt in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade or who are in the top 15 percent of their graduating class are eligible. Students who are participating in home-based instruction are also eligible if they pass the Washington assessment of student learning on their first attempt. Students who receive home-based instruction or attend private schools may take the Washington assessment of student learning at state expense.

After the K-12 certificate of mastery is required, students graduating from public and approved private high schools and those participating in home-based instruction are eligible if they pass the certificate of mastery on their first attempt.

#### Financial need

The financial eligibility criterion is met for students whose family income does not exceed 135 percent of the state median family income based on family size. This is approximately equivalent to \$69,000 for a family of four.

*Implementation.* The Washington promise scholarship is administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB). All money for the scholarship is deposited into

an account created in the custody of the state treasurer. The HECB determines the amount of the scholarship depending on available funds.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction provides class rank information and the Washington assessment for student learning results to the HECB.

*Scholarship Use and Limitations.* The Washington promise scholarship may be used for college-related expenses, including but not limited to, tuition, room and board, books, materials, and transportation. The scholarship can only be used to attend institutions in Washington for the purposes of receiving undergraduate education and must be used within ten years.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The substitute changes the academic merit eligibility requirements for the class of 2003 from passing the Washington assessment of student learning on the first attempt to passing the Washington assessment of student learning on the first attempt, or graduating in the top 15 percent. The substitute also clarifies that both public and private high school graduates, as well as students receiving home-based instruction are eligible. Students attending private high schools and those that receive home-based instruction may take the Washington assessment of student learning at state expense. Finally, a separate account is created in the custody of the state treasurer instead of placing funds in the advanced college tuition payment program account.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**Testimony For:** (Substitute Bill) This bill puts into law what has already been set into motion in the budget. It supports educational reform in the state. Students achieving high standards are awarded for their hard work and effort. The promise scholarship increases access to higher education by providing more financial aid, especially to some of the state's poorest students. The language in the substitute is a result of collaboration from many groups over the past year. It makes the program easier to administer. It also clarifies that the state need grant is protected and is still the priority financial aid program in the state. The revised eligibility allows for a transition to the certificate of mastery.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Carolyn Busch, Office of the Governor and Office of Financial Management; Bruce Botka, Higher Education Coordinating Board; Ken Kanikenberg, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Kathryn Crum for Renee Visich, Student Lobby; Rainier Houser, Association of Washington School Principals; Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators; and Tom Parker, Washington Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.