

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5660

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, March 3, 2003

Title: An act relating to gaining independence for students by establishing an educational assistance grant program for students with dependents.

Brief Description: Gaining independence for students by creating the educational assistance grant program for financially needy students with dependents.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Carlson, B. Sheldon, Schmidt, Shin, Mulliken, Horn, Kline, Prentice and Winsley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/24/03, 3/3/03 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5660 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Carlson, Chair; Schmidt, Vice Chair; Horn, Kohl-Welles, Mulliken, B. Sheldon and Shin.

Staff: Dario de la Rosa (786-7484)

Background: Under the State Need Grant Program, students with dependents are given a dependent care allowance in addition to the base grant. For the years 2002-2003, the maximum allowance is \$643 per year for a full-time student regardless of the number of qualifying dependents. To receive the dependent care allowance, the student must provide documentation that the dependent care expenses are needed. Dependents must be living with the student and be someone other than the student's spouse.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Gaining Independence for Students with Dependents program is created. To qualify for the program, resident students must meet all State Need Grant requirements, as well as have a dependent or dependents 18 years of age or younger under their care. Qualifying students may use the grants to attend any accredited public or private college or university in the state of Washington. The minimum grant is \$1,000 per academic year. The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) administers the program and may solicit and receive private funds to deposit in an account with the State Treasurer that keeps its own interest. HECB administrative duties are triggered when the balance in the account reaches \$500,000. The HECB is authorized to adjust the amount of the grant to account for any supplanting or reduction of any other grant, scholarship, or tax program.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill was not considered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Many low-income parents would like to return to school to better support their families, but face the challenge of paying for that education. Many forms of student aid, such as Pell Grants, are designed for full-time students who are single, not for working parents who have families. Furthermore, the State Need Grant does not provide enough, and state subsidies for child care are not enough. Good jobs require some sort of higher education. By providing a meaningful award to parents who have dependents, these parents will have better access to higher education opportunities. This will reduce the number of people on public assistance, and allow these families to contribute to the state.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Erin Welch, Citizen (pro); Tom Woodnutt, State Board for Technical and Community Colleges (pro); Bruce Botka, Higher Education Coordinating Board (pro); Julie L. Watts, Washington Association of Churches (pro); Jully Kohler-Hausmann, Poverty Action Network (pro); Holly Moore, Shoreline Community College (pro).