
Higher Education Committee

HB 1050

Brief Description: Creating a foster care endowed scholarship program.

Sponsors: Representatives Kenney, Hinkle, Kagi, Dunn, Quall, Clements, Morrell, McIntire, Schual-Berke, Haigh, Simpson, Linville, Santos and Chase.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates an endowed scholarship program administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) for foster care youth and former foster care youth ages 16 to 23 years.

Hearing Date: 1/21/05

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

When the state intervenes to remove children from their homes in cases of abuse, neglect, parental substance abuse, or family conflict, these children are placed in foster care homes. While some of these children eventually are returned to their own homes, others remain in the foster care system until reaching adulthood. When these foster care youth age out of the system at adulthood, they may be entering the adult world with little or no guidance or support for their transition.

Concerns over foster care youth have prompted various foundations and non-profit organizations to begin collecting data and proposing ways to help these young adults. A 2001 study by Casey Family Partners found that when compared with non-foster care youth, foster care youth are less likely to be enrolled in college preparatory programs, are twice as likely to drop out of high school, and are significantly under represented in postsecondary programs.

In response to these and similar findings, various state agencies recently have partnered with the Washington Education Foundation and other nonprofit entities to create the Foster Care to College Partnership. This partnership coordinates its efforts to provide support services, information, and college scholarship aid to youth in permanent, state-supported foster care.

Summary of Bill:

An endowed scholarship program is created for financially needy foster care youth and former foster care youth ages 16 to 23 years who have been in the state's foster care system six months or

longer since turning 14 years of age. Students must be Washington residents and enrolled or planning to enroll in a postsecondary program within three years of graduating from high school or earning a general equivalency diploma.

The HECB is directed to work with the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Department of Social and Health Services to publicize the program to eligible students 16 years of age and older. The HECB also must contract with a private agency to perform outreach to potentially eligible students and establish a foster care endowed scholarship advisory board of not more than seven members reflecting the cultural diversity of Washington. The advisory board is charged with assisting the HECB in publicizing the program, soliciting grants and donations from public and private sources, and assisting in program development and the application screening process.

One hundred fifty thousand dollars from the state general fund is appropriated to the HECB for the 2006 fiscal year. The HECB may deposit \$25,000 of state matching moneys into the endowment fund created in the custody of the State Treasurer when private cash donations reach \$25,000. After the initial match, state matching moneys may be released semiannually so long as there are moneys available in the endowment trust fund. The initial \$25,000 deposited into the endowment fund will be the principal and may not be invaded.

The amount of the scholarship may not exceed the student's demonstrated financial need, as determined by the HECB after consideration of the student's costs for tuition, fees, books, supplies, transportation, room, board, personal expenses, and child care, if applicable. Receipt of a scholarship does not affect a student's eligibility for other state financial aid assistance.

Appropriation: The sum of \$150,000 from the state general fund is appropriated to the HECB for the 2006 fiscal year.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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