

Higher Education Committee

ESHB 1236

Brief Description: Concerning witnessing a student's college bound scholarship pledge when efforts to obtain a parent's or guardian's signature are unsuccessful.

Sponsors: House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Ortiz-Self, Johnson, Santos, Lytton, Moscoso, Pettigrew, Walkinshaw, Kilduff, Sawyer, Reykdal, Bergquist, Fey, Tarleton and Hudgins).

Brief Summary of Bill

- Adds that a student's parents or guardians, in addition to the student, must be notified of the student's eligibility for the College Bound Scholarship (CBS) Program and the requirements for award of the scholarship.
- Allows a school administrator or counselor to witness a student's CBS pledge if after multiple attempts by the Office of Student Financial Assistance (Office) and the school counselor or administrator to secure the signature of the student's parent or guardian, the student's parent or guardian's signature is still not obtained.
- Requires the school counselor or administrator to indicate to the Office the nature of the unsuccessful attempts to contact the student's parent or guardian if the school counselor or administrator witnesses the pledge.
- Corrects Higher Education Coordinating Board references to the Office.

Hearing Date: 1/19/16

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

College Bound Scholarship Program.

The College Board Scholarship (CBS) Program was established in 2007 to provide guaranteed four-year tuition to students from low-income families. The first CBS awards were granted to the graduating high school class of 2012. Eligible students for the CBS include those who:

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- qualify for free or reduced-price lunches in the seventh grade; or
- are dependent from parents or guardians, or are receiving extended foster care services; and
- are in grades seven through 12; or
- are between the ages of 18 and 21 and have not graduated from high school.

Beginning in the seventh grade, eligible students are notified of their eligibility and the requirements for award of the scholarship. To be eligible to receive the CBS, a student must sign a pledge during the seventh or eighth grade that includes a commitment to graduate from high school with at least a C average and no felony convictions. The pledge must be witnessed by a parent or guardian and forwarded to the Office of Student Financial Assistance (Office). If the student is a dependent, the student is automatically enrolled without any necessary action by the student or the student's family.

To receive the CBS, the student must graduate with at least a C average from a public high school, approved private high school, or have received home-based instruction. The student cannot have a felony conviction and must be a resident student. Upon graduation, the student's family income will be assessed, and if it does not exceed 65 percent of the state median family income, the student will receive a scholarship.

The CBS recipients that attend public two-year or four-year institutions of higher education receive an award to cover the cost of tuition and fees, minus any state-funded grant, scholarship, or waiver assistance, plus \$500 for books and materials. The student must maintain satisfactory academic progress and may not receive the scholarship for more than four full-time years.

The Office of Student Financial Assistance.

On July 1, 2012, the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) was abolished and the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) was created in its place. Within the WSAC is the Office, which is in charge of administering the College Bound Scholarship (CBS) Program, which includes developing and distributing pledge forms, implementing the application and selection process, and tracking scholarship recipients. The Office also purchases tuition units under the Advanced College Tuition Payment Program, also known as the Guaranteed Education Tuition (GET) Program, for the purpose of the CBS awards. The Office distributes scholarship funds to the institutions of higher education on behalf of the recipients.

Summary of Bill:

The eligible student's parents or guardians must be notified of the student's eligibility for the CBS and the requirements for award of the scholarship. The Office is required to make multiple attempts to secure the signature of the student's parent or guardian for the purpose of witnessing the student's pledge. If the Office is unable to obtain the signature of the student's parent or guardian, the Office may partner with the school counselor or administrator to secure the parent's or guardian's signature. If the Office and school counselor or administrator are still unable to obtain the parent's or guardian's signature, the school counselor or administrator may witness the pledge and indicate to the Office the nature of the unsuccessful attempts to contact the student's parent or guardian.

All references to the HECB are changed to the Office of Student Financial Assistance.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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