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**SENATE BILL 5884**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2019 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Frockt, Palumbo, Liias, Kuderer, Nguyen, Hunt, and Wilson, C.

AN ACT Relating to establishing the evergreen promise pilot program, which provides for affordable access to institutions of higher education; adding a new chapter to Title 28B RCW; and providing an expiration date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The evergreen promise pilot program is established to demonstrate the impact of free college programs in improving high school graduation rates, college matriculation, and subsequently postsecondary degree and credential attainment. The purpose of the program is to encourage more Washington high school students in schools with low college attendance rates to enroll in and successfully complete a degree or certificate that will lead to opportunities for further education and jobs. By making a higher education credential more affordable and accessible, Washington will make more progress towards the legislature's goal of seventy percent of Washington adults having a postsecondary credential by 2023.

(2) It is the intent of the legislature to implement the program beginning with up to six pilot high schools. The legislature recognizes that promise programs are proven to significantly increase high school graduation rates by ensuring all high school graduates know they can attend college or community or technical college regardless of their family incomes. Thus, investment in these programs is an evidence-based means to improve high school graduation rates and to reduce, or even eliminate, opportunity gaps in postsecondary education for students from underrepresented minority groups, low-income students, foster youth, and students with disabilities.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Council" means the Washington student achievement council.

(2) "Eligible degree or certificate program" means a degree or credential program at an institution of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.92.030.

(3) "Evergreen promise award" means:

(a) For students attending two-year or four-year institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, the difference between the student's tuition and required fees, less the value of any state-funded grant, scholarship, or waiver assistance the student receives, plus five hundred dollars for books and materials;

(b) For students attending private four-year institutions of higher education in Washington, the representative average of awards granted to students in public research universities in Washington or the representative average of awards granted to students in public research universities in Washington in the year of high school graduation, whichever is greater;

(c) For students attending private vocational schools in Washington, the representative average of awards granted to students in public community and technical colleges in Washington or the representative average of awards granted to students in public community and technical colleges in Washington in the year of high school graduation, whichever is greater; or

(d) For students attending approved apprenticeship programs, tuition and fees, as determined by the office, in addition to required program supplies and equipment.

(4) "Gift aid" means financial aid received from the federal Pell grant, the state need grant program under chapter 28B.92 RCW, the college bound scholarship program under chapter 28B.118 RCW, the opportunity grant program under chapter 28B.50 RCW, the opportunity scholarship program under chapter 28B.145 RCW, and any other state grant or scholarship program that provides funds for educational purposes with no obligation of repayment. "Gift aid" does not include student loans or work-study programs.

(5) "Institutions of higher education" has the same meaning as in RCW 28B.10.016.

(6) "Office" means the office of student financial assistance.

(7) "Pilot cohort" means all students at a pilot high school in the high school graduating class of 2024.

(8) "Pilot high school" means a public high school in Washington state selected by the office subject to the requirements of the program under this chapter.

(9) "Program" means the evergreen promise pilot program.

(10) "Resident student" has the same meaning as in RCW 28B.15.012.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, for the 2019-20 academic year, the office shall select up to six pilot high schools to participate in the program under this section.

(2) The office shall use the following criteria in identifying pilot high schools to participate in the program:

(a) The pilot high school must be in the bottom quartile of college matriculation as measured by the high school's graduates having an enrollment record at a postsecondary institution at some point in the academic year following graduation, which is the summer term immediately following graduation through spring term of the next calendar year; and

(b) Each of the pilot high schools selected must be located in different legislative districts with at least one selected from the eastern side of the crest of the Cascade mountain range.

(3) At each pilot high school, one pilot cohort shall be selected to receive evergreen promise awards. An evergreen promise award is subject to a student meeting the following eligibility criteria:

(a) Must complete an annual application for aid as approved by the office;

(b) Be a resident student as defined in RCW 28B.15.012(2) (a) through (e);

(c) Has not previously earned a bachelor's degree from an institution of higher education;

(d) Be enrolled or accepted for enrollment for at least three quarter credits or the equivalent at an institution of higher education and enroll within six months of high school graduation; and

(e) Have graduated from an eligible pilot high school.

(4) To remain eligible for the program, once a student has earned forty-five credits, the student must meet the requirements of the institution of higher education's satisfactory academic progress policy for state financial aid to remain qualified or an alternative measure of student progress determined by a registered apprenticeship program.

(5) An eligible student may receive an evergreen promise award for a maximum of twelve academic quarters or the semester equivalent.

(6) An eligible student enrolled on a part-time basis shall receive a prorated portion of an evergreen promise award for any academic period in which he or she is enrolled on a part-time basis.

(7) Institutions of higher education shall award the student all need-based and merit-based financial aid for which the student would otherwise qualify. An evergreen promise award is intended to replace unmet need, loans, and, at the student's option, work-study award before any other grants or scholarships are reduced.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the council shall provide each pilot high school and pilot cohort with any one or more of the following interventions with the intention of improving high school graduation, college matriculation, and subsequently postsecondary degree and credential attainment:

(a) Academic preparation that may include access to college preparatory curriculum, academic counseling, study skills and time management instruction, or increased dual credit opportunities;

(b) Career exploration that may include opportunities for internships, employer visitation and business after school programs, or other work-based learning opportunities;

(c) Social support that may include peer mentoring, personal and social enrichment opportunities, or other mentoring programs;

(d) Summer programming that may include academic tutoring in core subjects, college and career visitations, motivational and enrichment activities, or postsecondary bridge programs;

(e) Interventions to help students and families navigate postsecondary pathways that may include informational interventions, application assistance, entrance exam preparation and tutoring, counseling about admissions requirements and financial aid opportunities, financial support to participate in college visits, or admissions and exam fee waivers and scholarships.

(2)(a) The council shall, in partnership with the pilot high school, prepare a plan for ensuring that students receiving an evergreen promise award have access to the support necessary to navigate the transition from high school to an institution of higher education.

(b) The council shall provide the plan to the relevant committees of the legislature by December 31, 2019, and begin implementation of the plan for the 2020-21 academic year.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The council shall conduct a study on the effectiveness of the evergreen promise pilot program and the Seattle promise program, including but not limited to:

(a) Changes in participation in dual credit programs at pilot high schools and among pilot cohorts;

(b) Changes in high school graduation rates as a result of the programs;

(c) Changes in college matriculations rates as a result of the programs;

(d) Effects on student persistence, completion, and time-to-degree rates in eligible degree or certificate programs as a result of receipt of awards;

(e) Any change in need or delivery of student services;

(f) The fiscal impact of the programs on the students, institutions of higher education, pilot high schools, local communities, and the state;

(g) Any other benefits to students, communities, or the state as a result of the programs.

(2) To the extent possible, the council shall report its findings to the relevant committees of the legislature beginning December 1, 2022, and on a biannual basis thereafter until the conclusion of the evergreen promise pilot program.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  This act may be known and cited as the evergreen promise act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  This chapter expires July 1, 2029.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Sections 1 through 7 of this act constitute a new chapter in Title 28B RCW.

**--- END ---**