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**SENATE BILL 6425**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2020 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Stanford, Lovelett, McCoy, Wilson, C., Nguyen, Hunt, Takko, Sheldon, Van De Wege, Liias, Das, Hasegawa, and Saldaña

AN ACT Relating to establishing the American Indian cultural study grant; adding a new chapter to Title 28B RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature recognizes the benefit to our state and nation of providing equal educational opportunities for all races and nationalities. The legislature finds that American Indian students are underrepresented in Washington's colleges and universities as a result of past discriminatory practices. The legislature also finds that such practices have hindered the advancement and promotion of specialized areas of knowledge that are vital to fostering American Indian wellness, cultural revitalization, and political sovereignty. The legislature finds that creating a grant program giving American Indian students the means and incentive to obtain a postsecondary credential in specialized areas of knowledge will help to rectify past discrimination and that the state will benefit from contributions made by American Indian students who pursue specialized fields of study.

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 intended to promote the understanding and study of specialized areas of knowledge fostering American Indian wellness, cultural revitalization, or political sovereignty at an institution of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.92.030.

(3) "Eligible student" means a student who demonstrates financial need, as defined in RCW 28B.92.030, and who meets all of the following criteria:

(a) A member of a federally recognized Indian tribe;

(b) Domiciled within the state for a minimum of one year as provided in RCW 28B.15.012(2) (a) or (b); and

(c) Registered for, and enrolled in, courses leading to a degree or certificate in an eligible degree or certificate program.

(4) "Washington American Indian cultural study grant" 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; and

(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.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Subject to the amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the council, in collaboration with the advisory committee established in section 5 of this act, shall provide Washington American Indian cultural study grant funds to eligible students. Grant funds shall be disbursed beginning no later than the fall term of the 2021 academic year if, by that date, state funds have been received. Thereafter, scholarship funds shall be disbursed on an annual basis.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  By December 1, 2021, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the council must submit a report to the appropriate higher education committees of the legislature that provides details and aggregate data on participating students, awards, enrollment, graduation, and student persistence. Reports shall be due to the appropriate committees once every four years thereafter.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The council shall establish an advisory committee to assist in program design and to develop criteria for the screening and selection of scholarship recipients. The committee shall be composed of persons involved in helping American Indian students to obtain a higher education. The membership of the committee may include, but is not limited to, representatives of Indian tribes, urban Indians, the governor's office of Indian affairs, the Washington state Indian education association, and institutions of higher education. The committee may share the same members of the committee established in RCW 28B.108.020.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Sections 2 through 5 of this act constitute a new chapter in Title 28B RCW.

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