
**College & Workforce Development
Committee**

SB 5635

Brief Description: Expanding opportunities for students to pursue mental and behavioral health professions.

Sponsors: Senators Brown, Bailey, Rivers, Walsh, Becker, King, Warnick, Frockt, Wilson, L., Hasegawa, Zeiger and O'Ban.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Increases the credit limit under the Opportunity Grant Program from 45 to 90 credits for students pursuing behavioral health professions.
- Requires the Washington State Opportunity Scholarship Board to identify high employer demand programs of study.

Hearing Date: 3/19/19

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

Opportunity Grant Program.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges administers the Opportunity Grant Program, which provides financial assistance to low-income students pursuing workforce education programs. The Opportunity Grant Program provides funding for tuition and mandatory fees, plus an additional \$1,000 grant per academic year for books, tools, and supplies. Students who are residents, have an income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, and complete a financial aid application are eligible for the grant. A student may receive the grant for 45 credits or for three years. Students receiving the Opportunity Grant are also eligible for support services up to \$1,500 per year, which may include tutoring, advising, emergency child care, or emergency transportation.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Washington State Opportunity Scholarship Program.

The Washington State Opportunity Scholarship (WSOS) program was established in 2011 to provide scholarships to low and middle-income resident students pursuing eligible high-demand degrees in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and health care, and to encourage scholarship recipients to work in the state upon completion of their degrees. The WSOS Board oversees the program and determines which programs qualify as high-demand degrees. The eligible student needs to be working towards a first bachelor's degree or a professional-technical certificate or degree at an eligible Washington college or university. For the 2017-18 academic year, 1,862 recipients were selected to receive the scholarship.

Summary of Bill:

Opportunity Grant Program.

The Opportunity Grant Program is expanded to allow students pursuing behavioral health professions to qualify for the award for 90 credits or up until four years. Behavioral health professions include psychiatrist, psychologist, psychiatric nurse, chemical dependency professional, social worker, or other mental health professional as defined by the Secretary of the Department of Health.

Washington State Opportunity Scholarship Program.

The WSOS Board is required to identify high employer demand programs of study rather than determine high employer demand programs. Additional technical corrections are made to the account language.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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