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**SENATE BILL 6542**

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**State of Washington**

**66th Legislature**

**2020 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Lias, Holy, Randall, Stanford, Carlyle, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Saldaña, and Wilson, C.

Read first time 01/22/20. Referred to Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development.

1 AN ACT Relating to adopting a uniform statewide automatic  
2 admissions policy at the four-year institutions of higher education;  
3 adding new sections to chapter 28B.77 RCW; creating a new section;  
4 and providing expiration dates.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that a postsecondary  
7 credential is essential to Washingtonians' ability to attain jobs  
8 with good salaries and advancement opportunities, and that meeting  
9 the increasing demand for credentialed workers to fill jobs in  
10 Washington is essential to the future health of the state's economy.  
11 The legislature also finds that public colleges and universities in  
12 Idaho have experienced growth in student enrollment following that  
13 state's adoption of a program under which eligible high school  
14 seniors are automatically admitted to public colleges and  
15 universities. The legislature finds that adoption of a comparable  
16 program in Washington could lead to similar gains in postsecondary  
17 student enrollment and an increase in credential attainment,  
18 benefiting students and the state as a whole. The legislature  
19 accordingly finds that the state should work to determine how best to  
20 help students navigate existing automatic admissions policies at  
21 individual public colleges and universities in Washington, and that

1 it should study the feasibility of adopting a uniform statewide  
2 automatic admissions policy in Washington as well as the likely  
3 success of such a policy.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) Subject to the availability of amounts  
5 appropriated for this specific purpose, the next step pilot program  
6 is created. The purpose of the program is to provide information on  
7 automatic admissions policies and financial aid options to high  
8 school students and measure and assess its impact on college  
9 attendance rates. Information provided to students must include, but  
10 is not limited to, automatic admissions policies at four-year  
11 institutions of higher education and other postsecondary  
12 institutions, and the availability of federal and state financial  
13 aid.

14 (2) The council, with the office of the superintendent of public  
15 instruction, shall select one school district from each side of the  
16 crest of the Cascade mountain range to participate in the pilot  
17 program. Each school district selected to participate in the pilot  
18 program must agree to participate for at least four years. School  
19 district selections must occur prior to the 2020-21 school year.

20 (3) The council must assist participating schools in developing  
21 resources and materials on institutions of higher education's  
22 automatic admissions policies and financial aid programs. The office  
23 of the superintendent of public instruction must provide the council  
24 pertinent student information for the purpose of measuring and  
25 assessing the impact of those resources and materials.

26 (4) Schools participating in the pilot program must collect data  
27 on the college attendance rate of students participating in the pilot  
28 program and provide it to the council annually.

29 (5) This section expires July 1, 2025.

30 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) The council, in consultation with the  
31 office of the superintendent of public instruction, shall convene the  
32 next step advisory committee to provide a recommendation to the  
33 legislature on a uniform statewide automatic admissions policy for  
34 first-time freshman undergraduate students at the four-year  
35 institutions of higher education.

36 (2) The advisory committee shall:

37 (a) Review automatic admissions laws and rules in other states,  
38 and relevant policies at four-year institutions of higher education

1 in Washington state. To the maximum extent practicable, the review  
2 must consider available data and the impact of automatic admissions  
3 policies on college attendance on first-time freshmen students  
4 including the impact of the next step pilot program created in  
5 section 2 of this act;

6 (b) Consult with admissions professionals at the four-year  
7 institutions of higher education;

8 (c) Report advisory committee findings and recommendations  
9 annually to the appropriate higher education committees of the  
10 legislature by December 1st; and

11 (d) Develop a final report with the advisory committee's findings  
12 and recommendations, including draft legislation establishing a  
13 uniform statewide automatic admissions policy, and submit it to the  
14 appropriate higher education committees of the legislature by  
15 December 1, 2024.

16 (3) The advisory committee shall include, but not be limited to,  
17 the following members:

18 (a) A representative from each of the four-year institutions of  
19 higher education, selected by the presidents of those institutions;

20 (b) The superintendent of public instruction, or his or her  
21 designee;

22 (c) The director of the council, or his or her designee;

23 (d) The lieutenant governor, or his or her designee;

24 (e) The executive director of the state board for community and  
25 technical colleges, or his or her designee; and

26 (f) In consultation with the state board for community and  
27 technical colleges and the four-year institutions of higher  
28 education, the council shall appoint:

29 (i) One student representative, representing a four-year  
30 institution of higher education east of the crest of the Cascade  
31 mountains;

32 (ii) One student representative, representing a four-year  
33 institution of higher education west of the crest of the Cascade  
34 mountains; and

35 (iii) One representative of the business community.

36 (4) (a) For purposes of this section, "first-time freshman" means  
37 an undergraduate who will enter postsecondary education as a full-  
38 time first year student on or before the fall semester of the  
39 academic year that begins immediately following:

40 (i) The student's graduation from high school; or

1 (ii) The last day of the school year:

2 (A) That would have been the student's junior or senior year of  
3 high school; and

4 (B) In which the student completes the requirements for high  
5 school graduation and obtains a high school equivalency certificate  
6 as provided in RCW 28B.50.536 instead of receiving a diploma; and

7 (C) In which the student remains continuously enrolled as a full-  
8 time student.

9 (b) Any college credit earned through dual credit courses while  
10 enrolled in high school does not impact a student's status as a  
11 first-time freshman.

12 (5) This section expires December 1, 2025.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** Sections 2 and 3 of this act are each  
14 added to chapter 28B.77 RCW.

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