

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## E2SHB 1659

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As of February 21, 2022

**Title:** An act relating to making higher education more affordable and accessible for students by bridging the gap between cost and need to reduce barriers, improve opportunity, and advance economic security.

**Brief Description:** Making higher education more affordable and accessible for students by bridging the gap between cost and need to reduce barriers, improve opportunity, and advance economic security.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Slatter, Sullivan, Leavitt, Ryu, Morgan, Berry, Ramel, Thai, Wicks, Sells, Johnson, J., Berg, Bateman, Valdez, Chopp, Walen, Fey, Goodman, Gregerson, Taylor, Macri, Simmons, Wylie, Kloba, Pollet, Ormsby, Harris-Talley, Hackney and Frame).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/13/22, 83-15.

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/22/22.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Modifies the Washington College Grant (WCG) income eligibility thresholds and award levels.
- Entitles WCG students who are receiving the maximum WCG award to an additional annual stipend, called a bridge grant.

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**Staff:** Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

**Background:** Washington College Grant. The State Need Grant was modified in 2019 and renamed the Washington College Grant (WCG). The WCG is the state's largest financial

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aid program and provides awards to low-income students to pursue postsecondary education. The WCG is an entitlement program with guaranteed awards for those students who qualify. The WCG award amount varies based on the institution the student attends and the student's family income. For example, for students attending the state's public institutions, the maximum award is tuition and services and activities fees for 15 quarter credit hours or the equivalent. For students attending private, four-year, not-for-profit higher education institutions, in 2019-20 the maximum award was \$9,739. An eligible student may receive a WCG for five years or up to 125 percent of the published length of the student's program. Part-time students receive prorated awards.

For the 2021-22 academic year, the median family income for a family of four is \$102,000.

**Summary of Bill:** Washington College Grant Eligibility and Award Changes. For academic years 2022-23 and 2023-24, the following WCG income eligibility thresholds and award amounts apply as follows:

<b>Median Family Income</b>	<b>Award Amount</b>
0-60 percent of state MFI	maximum award
61-70 percent of state MFI	60 percent of maximum award
71-75 percent of state MFI	50 percent of maximum award
76-80 percent of state MFI	25 percent of maximum award
81-100 percent of state MFI	10 percent of maximum award

Beginning with academic year 2024-25, the following WCG income eligibility thresholds and award amounts apply as follows:

<b>Median Family Income</b>	<b>Award Amount</b>
0-70 percent of state MFI	Maximum award
71-80 percent of state MFI	50 percent of maximum award
81-90 percent of state MFI	25 percent of maximum award
91-100 percent of state MFI	10 percent of maximum award

Bridge Grants. Bridge grants are annual stipends provided in addition to the WCG to provide supplementary financial support to low-income students to cover higher education expenses beyond tuition and fees.

Beginning with the 2022-23 academic year, WCG recipients who are receiving a maximum WCG award are also entitled to receive a bridge grant.

Beginning with the 2024-25 academic year, the bridge grant award amounts are as follows:

- for WCG recipients who are also recipients of the College Bound Scholarship, the bridge grant is \$500 annually; or
- for WCG recipients who are not College Bound Scholarship recipients, the bridge grant is \$1,000 annually.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.