

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

*Rep. Don Carlson, Republican Co-Chair; and
Rep. Phyllis Kenney, Democratic Co-Chair*

BILL ANALYSIS E3SSB 5598

Brief Description: Creating the Washington's promise scholarship program.

Background: The Legislature appropriated \$9 million in the 1999-2001 budget to the Higher Education Coordinating Board to establish the Washington promise scholarship program. Students are eligible if they are in the top 10 percent of their graduating class in 1999 or the top 15 percent in 2000, and their families earn no more than 135 percent of the state median family income. Eligible students may receive up to two years worth of community college tuition. In 1999, the number of eligible students exceeded estimates. As a result, grants awarded during the first year were less than the full resident community college tuition. The scholarship program will end on June 30, 2001 unless it is established into law or included in the 2001-2003 budget.

Summary of the bill: The Washington promise scholarship is established. This merit and need-based scholarship, implemented by the Higher Education Coordinating Board, is awarded to students based on two specific eligibility criteria. The award consists of two years of tuition at the community college full-time tuition rate.

Eligibility. Eligibility is based on academic merit and student family income limit.

Academic merit

Before the K-12 certificate of mastery is required, students graduating in 2001 or 2002 from public or approved private high schools whose class rank is within the top 15 percent of their high school graduating class are eligible. Beginning with the 2003 graduating class, students who pass the Washington assessment of student learning on their first attempt in the 10th grade or who are in the top 15 percent of their graduating class are eligible. Students who are participating in home-based instruction are also eligible if they pass the Washington assessment of student learning on their first attempt. All students have an additional option of earning a cumulative Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) score of 1200 on their first attempt to be eligible.

After the K-12 certificate of mastery is required, students graduating from public and approved private high schools and those participating in home-based instruction are eligible if they pass the certificate of mastery on their first attempt. Students who achieve, on their first attempt, a cumulative SAT score state percentile ranking equivalent to or above the corresponding percentage of students that passed the certificate of mastery are also eligible. The Superintendent of Public Instruction provides the methodology and makes this determination.

Financial need

The financial eligibility criterion is met for students whose family income does not exceed 135 percent of the state median family income based on family size. This is approximately equivalent to \$69,000 for a family of four.

Implementation. The Washington promise scholarship is administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB). All money for the scholarship is deposited into an account created in the custody of the state treasurer. The HECB determines the amount of the scholarship depending on available funds. The state need grant is given funding priority. Priority is defined as being able to provide need grants to qualified students whose family income is at or below 65 percent of the state median income adjusted for family size.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction provides class rank information and the Washington assessment for student learning results to the HECB.

Scholarship Use and Limitations. The Washington promise scholarship may be used for college-related expenses, including but not limited to, tuition, room and board, books, materials, and transportation. The scholarship can only be used to attend institutions in Washington for the purposes of receiving undergraduate education and must be used within six years.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

*Prepared for the House Higher Education Committee
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