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**SENATE BILL 5666**

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**State of Washington 65th Legislature 2017 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Frockt, Palumbo, Nelson, Keiser, and Saldaña

AN ACT Relating to establishing the Washington promise program, which provides for affordable access to community and technical colleges; amending RCW 43.88C.010; adding a new chapter to Title 28B RCW; providing an effective date; and declaring an emergency.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The Washington promise program is established to help make the first two years of college affordable and accessible to all citizens of the state of Washington by offering a tuition waiver for eligible students enrolled in associate degree or certificate programs offered by Washington's community and technical colleges. The purpose of the program is to encourage more Washington residents who have not yet earned an associate's degree to enroll in and successfully complete an associate's degree or certificate that will lead to opportunities for further education and jobs. By making a higher education credential more affordable and accessible, Washington will make more progress towards the legislature's attainment goal of seventy percent of Washington adults having a postsecondary credential by 2023.

The legislature recognizes that increasing the number of residents with associate degrees will lead to increased attainment for higher level degrees as students may transfer to comprehensive or research universities.

It is the intent of the legislature to implement the Washington promise program in phases, starting with a free thirteenth year. The legislature recognizes that free thirteenth year and promise programs are proven to significantly increase high school graduation rates by ensuring all high school graduates know they can attend a community or technical college regardless of their family incomes. Thus, investment in these programs is an evidence-based means to improve high school graduation rates and to reduce, or even eliminate, opportunity gaps in postsecondary education for students from underrepresented minority groups, for low-income students, for foster youth, and for students with disabilities.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Board" means the state board for community and technical colleges.

(2) "Community or technical college" means the community or technical colleges governed under chapter 28B.50 RCW.

(3) "Eligible degree or certificate program" means:

(a) An associate degree program;

(b) Academic programs with credits that can fully transfer via an articulation agreement toward a baccalaureate degree or postbaccalaureate degree at an institution of higher education; or

(c) Professional and technical programs that lead to a recognized postsecondary credential.

(4) "Gift aid" means financial aid received from the federal Pell grant, the state need grant program under chapter 28B.92 RCW, the college bound scholarship program under chapter 28B.118 RCW, the opportunity grant program under chapter 28B.50 RCW, the opportunity scholarship program under chapter 28B.145 RCW, or any other state grant or scholarship program that provides funds for educational purposes with no obligation of repayment. "Gift aid" does not include student loans and work-study programs.

(5) "Office" means the office of student financial assistance.

(6) "Program" means the Washington promise program.

(7) "Resident student" means a student who is a resident student as defined in RCW 28B.15.012.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) Subject to availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the office shall administer the Washington promise program for resident students seeking an associate's degree or certificate from a community or technical college under the terms and conditions in this section.

(2) To be eligible for the program, a resident student who has not previously earned an associate's degree must be enrolled in a community or technical college in an eligible degree or certificate program.

(3) Students must complete the free application for federal student aid (FAFSA) or the Washington application for state financial aid each academic year in which they seek eligibility for the program.

(4) To remain eligible for the program, once a student has earned forty-five credits, the student must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.0.

(5) For the 2018-19 and 2019-20 academic years, eligible students shall receive an award for a free thirteenth year, or three academic quarters, if they meet the following requirements:

(a) Have graduated high school within the past six calendar months before enrolling in a community or technical college; and

(b) Have a family income that does not exceed seventy percent of the state median family income, adjusted for family size.

(6) For the 2020-21 academic year, eligible students shall receive an award for six academic quarters if they meet the following requirements:

(a) Have obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent within the past six calendar months before enrolling in a community or technical college; and

(b) Have a family income that does not exceed seventy percent of the state median family income, adjusted for family size.

(7) For the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years, eligible students shall receive an award for six academic quarters if they meet the following requirements:

(a) Have obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent within the past sixteen calendar months before enrolling in a community or technical college; and

(b) Have a family income that does not exceed the state median family income, adjusted for family size.

(8) Beginning with the 2023-24 academic year, eligible students shall receive an award for six academic quarters if they meet the following requirements:

(a) Have obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent; and

(b) Have a family income that does not exceed the state median family income, adjusted for family size.

(9)(a) The office shall award grants to eligible students for an amount up to the cost of tuition and fees as defined in RCW 28B.15.020, and services and activities fees as defined in RCW 28B.15.041, less all other gift aid. The student shall also receive a cost of attendance stipend if the student meets the criteria in (b) of this subsection. The calculation in this subsection (9)(a) shall not result in a reduction of gift aid.

(b) Up to one thousand five hundred dollars for books and other related higher education expenses must be provided as a stipend to students with a family income that does not exceed seventy percent of the state median family income. If a student eligible for the stipend under this subsection (9)(b) is enrolled less than full time, the student must receive a prorated portion of the stipend based on the number of credits in which the student is enrolled.

(10) By December 1, 2019, and annually by December 1st thereafter, the board shall report to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the legislature on the following impacts of the program:

(a) Student enrollment in the eligible degree or certificate programs;

(b) Student completion rates of credits, certificates, and degrees;

(c) The cost of implementation, including the cost per student;

(d) Additional resources used to meet student needs, such as counseling, precollege courses, child care, or transportation; and

(e) The number of students receiving wraparound services, the number of schools providing wraparound services, and the resources needed to provide wraparound services.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The board shall develop a plan to provide all program students who are enrolled at a community or technical college with a quarter-long student success course, during or before their first enrollment period, that teaches essential skills for college success. Essential skills may include tips for study habits and time management, financial aid information and resources, connecting students with advisors, encouraging student mentoring, helping establish student cohorts, and providing information about services available on campus. The plan must address how the board will ensure that students receiving a Washington promise program grant are enrolled in such a course during or before their first quarter of eligibility. The board shall provide the plan to the relevant committees of the legislature by December 1, 2018, and begin implementation of the plan for the 2019-20 academic year.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The Washington state institute for public policy shall conduct a study on the effectiveness of the Washington promise program, including but not limited to: Any increase in enrollments in community or technical colleges; any decreases in enrollments elsewhere in institutions of higher education; changes in student persistence, completion, and time-to-degree rates in eligible degree or certificate programs; and any change in need or delivery of student services. The analysis shall include the fiscal impact of the program on the students, community and technical colleges, and state. The Washington state institute for public policy shall report its findings to the relevant committees of the legislature by December 1, 2023.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The caseload forecast council shall estimate the anticipated caseload of the program and submit this forecast as required in RCW 43.88C.020.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The board may adopt rules to implement this chapter.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  If the legislature does not appropriate enough funding to support the statewide implementation of section 3(5) of this act, the board shall provide grants to community or technical college districts to implement the free thirteenth year of the program. The community or technical college districts shall partner with local governments and private entities to secure matching funding for the free thirteenth year. The board shall adopt criteria for the grants, prioritizing aid for at-risk students and programs with funding partners.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  This chapter may be known and cited as the Washington promise program.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.88C.010 and 2015 c 128 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The caseload forecast council is hereby created. The council shall consist of two individuals appointed by the governor and four individuals, one of whom is appointed by the chairperson of each of the two largest political caucuses in the senate and house of representatives. The chair of the council shall be selected from among the four caucus appointees. The council may select such other officers as the members deem necessary.

(2) The council shall employ a caseload forecast supervisor to supervise the preparation of all caseload forecasts. As used in this chapter, "supervisor" means the caseload forecast supervisor.

(3) Approval by an affirmative vote of at least five members of the council is required for any decisions regarding employment of the supervisor. Employment of the supervisor shall terminate after each term of three years. At the end of the first year of each three-year term the council shall consider extension of the supervisor's term by one year. The council may fix the compensation of the supervisor. The supervisor shall employ staff sufficient to accomplish the purposes of this section.

(4) The caseload forecast council shall oversee the preparation of and approve, by an affirmative vote of at least four members, the official state caseload forecasts prepared under RCW 43.88C.020. If the council is unable to approve a forecast before a date required in RCW 43.88C.020, the supervisor shall submit the forecast without approval and the forecast shall have the same effect as if approved by the council.

(5) A councilmember who does not cast an affirmative vote for approval of the official caseload forecast may request, and the supervisor shall provide, an alternative forecast based on assumptions specified by the member.

(6) Members of the caseload forecast council shall serve without additional compensation but shall be reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120 while attending sessions of the council or on official business authorized by the council. Nonlegislative members of the council shall be reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

(7) "Caseload," as used in this chapter, means:

(a) The number of persons expected to meet entitlement requirements and require the services of public assistance programs, state correctional institutions, state correctional noninstitutional supervision, state institutions for juvenile offenders, the common school system, long-term care, medical assistance, foster care, and adoption support;

(b) The number of students who are eligible for the Washington college bound scholarship program and are expected to attend an institution of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.92.030;

(c) The number of students who are eligible for the Washington promise program and are expected to attend a community or technical college as defined in section 2 of this act; and

(d) The number of children who are eligible, as defined in RCW 43.215.405, to participate in, and the number of children actually served by, the early childhood education and assistance program.

(8) The caseload forecast council shall forecast the temporary assistance for needy families and the working connections child care programs as a courtesy.

(9) The caseload forecast council shall forecast youth participating in the extended foster care program pursuant to RCW 74.13.031 separately from other children who are residing in foster care and who are under eighteen years of age.

(10) Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions provided in RCW 43.88.020 apply to this chapter.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Sections 1 through 9 and 12 of this act constitute a new chapter in Title 28B RCW.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect July 1, 2017.

**--- END ---**