

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5884

As of February 18, 2019

Title: An act relating to establishing the evergreen promise pilot program, which provides for affordable access to institutions of higher education.

Brief Description: Establishing the evergreen promise pilot program, which provides for affordable access to institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Senators Frockt, Palumbo, Liias, Kuderer, Nguyen, Hunt and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/14/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the Evergreen Promise Pilot Program providing scholarships equivalent to the cost of tuition and fees plus a stipend to students in a select cohort in pilot high schools.
- Establishes pilot high schools must be selected from those in the bottom quartile for high school to college matriculation rates.
- Requires, subject to appropriation, students in pilot high schools must be provided with certain wraparound student support services and interventions to improve college-going rates.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

Background: State Financial Aid Programs. The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) administers two primary need-based financial aid programs for students enrolled in eligible postsecondary programs: the State Need Grant (SNG) and the College Bound Scholarship (CBS).

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.

The SNG Program provides need-based financial aid to income eligible students pursuing postsecondary education. Eligible students have a household income less than 70 percent of the state's median family income.

The CBS was created by the Legislature in 2007. The scholarship covers tuition at comparable public college rates, some fees, and a small book allowance. Students in seventh- or eighth-grade whose family meets the income requirements must submit and complete an application by June 30th of the student's eighth-grade year. Students must also meet the College Bound Pledge requirements and income eligibility as determined by the student's financial aid application—FAFSA or WASFA—in their senior year of high school.

Seattle Promise Program. The Seattle Promise Program is a new, government-funded scholarship program, modeled after and incorporating Seattle's existing 13th Year Program. The 13th Year Program was instated in 2008 to help more Seattle high school students enroll in and graduate from city colleges. Under the Seattle Promise Program, Seattle high school graduates will get two free years of community and technical college, regardless of family income. The Seattle Promise Program will be phased-in over two years and will be a last-dollar scholarship.

Summary of Bill: The Evergreen Promise Pilot Program is created. The program awards students in the high school graduating class of 2023 in eligible pilot high schools with scholarships equivalent to the cost of tuition and fees plus a stipend at public colleges or universities or an equivalent dollar amount at private institutions.

Pilot High School and Cohort Selection. Subject to amounts appropriated, the Evergreen Promise Pilot Program requires WSAC to select up to six pilot high schools to participate in the program. To be eligible, the high schools must:

- be in the bottom quartile for college matriculation rates as defined by the percent of high school graduates who enroll in college within one year of high school graduations; and
- be located in different legislative districts with at least one selected from a district on the eastern side of the Cascade Mountain range.

The cohort representing the high school graduating class of 2023—next year's entering freshman—is selected to receive the award at the pilot high schools. The award is not means tested.

Award Amounts. Students in the high school graduating class of 2023 at pilot high schools will be eligible for:

- tuition and fees plus an annual \$500 stipend at a public college or university in Washington;
- the equivalent of tuition and fees at the highest cost public university plus a \$500 stipend at a private four-year institution of higher education in Washington; or
- the equivalent of tuition and fees at the community and technical college sector plus a \$500 stipend at a private vocational institution of higher education in Washington.

The award is a last-dollar award meaning students would draw upon any available need-based or other aid before being awarded Evergreen Promise funds.

Student Supports. Students at pilot high schools and in pilot cohorts may receive some combination of the following services subject to amounts appropriated specifically for this purpose:

- academic preparation;
- career exploration;
- balance academic support with social support;
- summer programming, especially after graduation;
- earlier interventions and involve and encourage parents and family; and
- help students navigate postsecondary pathways and processes

Evaluation. WSAC must submit a report to the Legislature beginning December 2022 and biannually thereafter evaluating the impact of the Evergreen Promise and Seattle Promise programs on students, high schools, and the communities participating in the Evergreen Scholarship Pilot Program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 8, 2019.

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

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: There have been several promise bills over the years but we have struggled with a way to fund them at scale. One option is to use a pilot approach, as Seattle has done. This bill creates a promise program for some low matriculation high schools, geographically dispersed throughout the state. I imagine that these high schools will be in areas with relatively high rates of poverty and economic distress. This bill targets those students and does not means test the program. This bill will especially help students who are in the middle and lower middle income as current financial aid does not target them. We think fully funding the state need grant should be the top priority. But, we also think that sending a clear message to students that they can attend college tuition free is a good idea. It is pretty clear from the College Bound Scholarship that when you tell lower income students they can attend college for free that they participate and graduate at higher rates. Limiting free college programs to students in community and technical colleges limits students options and we appreciate that this bill does not take that approach. This bill goes a long way to supporting students in the gap between financial aid and the means to pay for college. This bill will open the minds of young people to the possibilities. The focus on low matriculation high schools could be truly transformative. This bill would help get students past the tipping point in educational attainment where they can earn a living wage. The additional supports provided in this bill are critical.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator David Frockt, Prime Sponsor; Becca Kenna-Schenk, Western Washington University; Ruben Flores, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Juliette Schindler Kelly, College Success Foundation; Steve DuPont, Central Washington University; Charles Adkins, Director of Legislative Affairs, Geoduck Student Union.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: PRO: Steve Leahy, Director,
Government Relations, Seattle Community Colleges.