

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1156

As Reported by House Committee On:
Postsecondary Education & Workforce

Title: An act relating to extending the terms of eligibility for the Washington college grant program.

Brief Description: Extending the terms of eligibility for the Washington college grant program.

Sponsors: Representatives Slatter, Reed, Callan, Simmons, Timmons, Reeves, Chopp, Lekanoff, Thai, Paul, Bergquist, Wylie, Pollet, Ormsby and Tharinger; by request of Student Achievement Council.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Postsecondary Education & Workforce: 1/11/23, 1/18/23 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Extends eligibility for the Washington College Grant from five years or 125 percent of the published length of the student's program to six years or 150 percent of the published length of the student's program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Slatter, Chair; Entenman, Vice Chair; Reed, Vice Chair; Ybarra, Ranking Minority Member; Waters, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hansen, Jacobsen, Klicker, Leavitt, Pollet, Schmidt and Timmons.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Chandler.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative McEntire.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff: Saranda Ross (786-7068).

Background:

The Washington College Grant (WCG) is the state's largest financial aid program and provides grants to low-income students to pursue postsecondary education. The WCG is an entitlement program administered by the Washington Student Achievement Council with guaranteed grants for students who qualify. To qualify, a student must:

- demonstrate financial need;
- be a state resident;
- be enrolled at a Washington higher education institution or be enrolled in an approved, registered apprenticeship program;
- file a financial aid application; and
- not already have a bachelor's degree or higher.

The maximum WCG award covers tuition, and services and activities fees, for 15 quarter credits or the equivalent at the state's public institutions. A student is eligible to receive the WCG for five years or up to 125 percent of the published length of the student's program.

Summary of Bill:

A student is eligible to receive the WCG for six years or up to 150 percent of the published length of the student's program or the credit or clock-hour equivalent.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2023.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill fixes the gap between state and federal aid by aligning the eligibility timeline with the Pell Grant. Some students receive the WCG and the Pell Grant, but at year five the WCG stops while the Pell Grant continues. This leads to students dropping out or taking on more debt, and to students who end up with debt but no degree.

Only 19 percent of students nationally actually receive a credential within four years. For over three decades, national degree-granting agencies have measured success within six years. Older students, students at community and technical colleges, low-income and working students, first-generation students, and students taking care of family need extra

time to earn credentials. Students also need extra time after experiencing an unforeseen disruptive event during college, such as an illness. Further, this bill will allow students more time to engage with their educational community and successfully enter their chosen fields.

This bill reduces the burden on administrators because they will no longer have to apply two different standards and ensures Washington gets a better return on investment.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Vandana Slatter, prime sponsor; Becky Thompson, Washington Student Achievement Council; Jacob Vigdor; Ruben Flores, Council of Presidents; Yokiko Hayashi-Saguil and Jacob Katz, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Bill Lyne, United Faculty of Washington State; Maria Rebecchi, College Success Foundation; Terri Standish-Kuon, Independent Colleges of Washington; Adán Mendoza-Sandoval, Associated Students of Central Washington University; Naira Gonzales Aranda, Associated Students of Western Washington University; Alex Davidson, The Associated Students of the University of Washington; and Joe Wilcox, Workforce Board.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.