

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1559

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to the student basic needs at public postsecondary institutions act.

Brief Description: Establishing the student basic needs at public postsecondary institutions act.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Entenman, Fitzgibbon, Stonier, Paul, Riccelli, Bergquist, Pollet and Leavitt).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Postsecondary Education & Workforce: 1/31/23, 2/14/23 [DPS];
Appropriations: 2/23/23, 2/24/23 [DP2S(w/o sub PEW)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/3/23, 57-40.
Senate Amended.
Passed Senate: 4/12/23, 29-20.
House Refused to Concur.
Senate Receded.
Senate Amended.
Passed Senate: 4/20/23, 28-20

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Creates Student Basic Needs Task Forces at each public four-year institution and the tribal college, and a single Student Basic Needs Task Force at the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.
- Creates Hunger-Free and Basic Needs Campus Strategic Plans.
- Enacts the Free and Reduced-Price Meals Pilot Program.
- Creates a Benefits Navigator Grant Program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

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.

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Slatter, Chair; Entenman, Vice Chair; Reed, Vice Chair; Hansen, Leavitt, Paul, Pollet and Timmons.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Ybarra, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Jacobsen, Klicker and McEntire.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Waters, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Schmidt.

Staff: Saranda Ross (786-7068)

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Postsecondary Education & Workforce. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Berg, Chopp, Davis, Fitzgibbon, Lekanoff, Pollet, Riccelli, Ryu, Senn, Simmons, Slatter, Springer, Stonier and Tharinger.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Stokesbary, Ranking Minority Member; Chambers, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Corry, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Connors, Couture, Dye, Harris, Rude, Sandlin, Schmick and Steele.

Staff: Kate Henry (786-7349).

Background:

Several community and technical colleges provide a range of on-campus resource services. Lower Columbia College's One-Stop Center offers students general information and connection with resources. Edmonds College has a Center for Student Cultural Diversity and Inclusion, which provides emergency resources. South Puget Sound Community College's Personal Support Center offers assistance with food, connection to housing and basic needs support, and on-campus childcare and parent support classes.

United Way of King County provides Benefits Hubs to nine community and technical colleges in King County: Bellevue College, Cascadia College, Highline College, Green River College, North Seattle College, Renton Technical College, Seattle Central College, Shoreline Community College, and South Seattle College; and one baccalaureate institution, University of Washington Bothell. The Benefits Hubs offer a variety of services such as financial coaching, basic needs access, food security, and emergency grant help.

In addition to University of Washington Bothell, there are several baccalaureate institutions that offer similar campus benefits resource hubs or services. The Evergreen State College has a Basic Needs Advocacy and Resource Center that provides navigation support for public benefits, housing, and basic needs. The University of Washington Tacoma has an Office of Student Advocacy and Support offering extensive assessment, case management, and resource connections. Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, Western Washington University, and Washington State University do not offer a centralized, physical resource hub, but do provide case management and access to resources and referrals, such as food pantries.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill:

Student Basic Needs Task Forces and Strategic Plans.

Student Basic Needs Task Forces (Task Forces) are created: one by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (College Board) and one by each public four-year institution of higher education and the tribal college. The Student Achievement Council must provide technical assistance to the Task Forces.

The Task Forces created by the public four-year institutions of higher education and the tribal college must develop a Hunger-Free and Basic Needs Campus Strategic Plan for their respective institution and tribal college. Likewise, the Task Force created and administered by the College Board must develop a single Hunger-Free and Basic Needs Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) for community and technical colleges.

Each Strategic Plan must:

- collect and disseminate results of the biennial student survey developed by the Student Achievement Council assessing food security, housing security, and access to basic economic support;
- design a Benefits Resource Hub to assist students with accessing public benefits, emergency financial assistance, and other community resources;
- ensure staffing of at least one Benefits Navigator to assist students in accessing public benefits and existing emergency assistance programs;
- reduce or remove barriers to accessing campus food pantries;
- conduct outreach targeted at likely low-income and food-insecure students by promoting opportunities for benefits assistance and emergency financial resources;
- identify opportunities for partnerships with community-based organizations;
- facilitate discussions amongst community stakeholders on student basic needs; and
- assess the distribution of state funds for basic needs support.

In addition to the duties listed above, the Task Force created and administered by the College Board must also identify how many full-time benefits navigators are necessary to adequately assist the student population of college districts that receive Benefits Resource Hubs.

The findings and activities from each Strategic Plan and recommendations regarding strategies to address student basic needs must be reported to the Legislature by December 1, 2025, and every other year thereafter.

Benefits Navigator Grant Program.

The College Board must design and implement a Benefits Navigator Grant Program (Grant Program) to provide funding for Benefits Navigators at selected community and technical college districts.

Free and Reduced-Price Meals Pilot Program.

An organization representing the presidents of the public four-year institutions of higher education and the College Board must select two public four-year institutions of higher education and four community and technical college districts, respectively, to participate in a pilot program that provides free and low-cost meal plans or food vouchers to eligible low-income students.

Definitions.

Student basic needs are food, water, shelter, clothing, physical health, mental health, childcare, or similar needs that students enrolled at an institution of higher education, tribal institution, or community or technical college may face difficulty with, and that hinder their ability to begin or continue their enrollment.

A Benefits Navigator is an individual employed by an institution of higher education, tribal institution, or community or technical college for the purpose of helping students seek, apply for, and receive assistance from benefits programs, emergency resources, and community resources.

A Benefits Resource Hub is a single location on campus where students are directed to get assistance from a Benefits Navigator to understand what basic needs benefits they may be eligible for and receive assistance in applications, enrollment, and removing barriers to receive support services.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S):

The Senate amendment makes the following changes:

- eliminates the Student Basic Needs Task Forces but transfers the Task Force duties to the institutions of higher education and the tribal college, in coordination with their respective navigators;
- requires a one-time implementation of the Strategic Plans instead of every other year;
- reduces the Benefits Navigators from full-time to at least .75 full-time equivalent and requires that the position be filled by a single individual;
- makes the hiring of Benefits Navigators subject to appropriations;
- eliminates the Benefits Resource Hubs but stations a Benefits Navigator at a single location on campus where students are directed to receive assistance;

- directs the Washington Student Achievement Council to collect and disseminate results of a student basic needs survey; and
- modifies the content of the reports due to the Legislature to include the outcomes from the Benefits Navigators.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Postsecondary Education & Workforce):

(In support) Washington students' basic needs are not being met. People make the choice to go to college because it is a path to independence. This bill will help students stay in school while meeting their basic needs.

This bill creates opportunities for campuses to identify what students need to fulfill their full potential. All students who use existing campus food banks are low income and half are students of color. Students drop out because they are forced to deprioritize education to survive. For example, students have to spend hours working instead of studying, or spend money on food rather than school supplies. College success is not just good grades, it is also good health.

A recent study by the Washington Student Achievement Council found that over 70 percent of students did not use a campus resource to support their needs. This bill would help students identify the resources available to them. While many students already receive grants, scholarships, and access to food pantries, it is not enough. Student meal plans run out by the last month of the quarter, so students turn to food pantries. What is offered there often does not meet nutritional needs, especially for those students who have dietary restrictions. These pantries are underfunded and increasingly serve staff as well as students. Some on-campus pantries only operate once a month due to funding limitations and community pantries are operating beyond their capacity. Transportation to outside food pantries, literacy, and lack of childcare are also barriers. Further, it can be difficult to keep a state Electronic Benefits Transfer card because students have to work 29 hours a week to remain eligible. Students need outreach and education to know what they are eligible for and what is available both on and off campus.

For students to access resources, they have to go to multiple departments and thus have to retell their stories. The process to obtain resources should be trauma-informed and streamlined to reduce the negative impact on mental health.

(Opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Appropriations):

(In support) Half of all students report experiencing basic needs insecurities during their postsecondary education career. Overall, cost is the largest barrier to higher education. Students in college are hardworking, but often experience insecurities regarding how to pay for food, housing, medical costs, and child care. If student needs are met, then students will graduate at a higher rate.

Now is a critical time to address student needs. Benefit navigators are a proven model around the country to leverage federal funds and address the crisis of basic needs. This bill will increase the number of students able to take advantage of basic needs assistance. Coordinating eligibility through benefit navigators will allow for students to have one less burden.

Community and technical college data states that those students who are able to take advantage of basic needs assistance, more than 85 percent complete the following quarter. Those students able to take advantage of basic needs assistance also are employed at a higher rate upon graduation.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying (Postsecondary Education & Workforce): Representative Debra Entenman, prime sponsor; Joseph Gabriel Burke, Washington Student Association; Alex Hur, Northwest Education Access; Madeline Sprute and Martell Naranjo, Tacoma Community College; Jaeda Nelson, Wildcat Pantry, Central Washington University; Sybil Jordan; Michelle Carrillo; Joel Anderson, University of Washington Graduate and Professional Student Senate; Sopenara Chay and Eden McDade, South Puget Sound Community College; Nora Selander, Western Washington University; Sandy Kaiser, The Evergreen State College; Emily Portillo, United Way of King County; Candice Wheeler; Jackson Feaster; Ted Topper; Jacob Katz and Jennifer Dellinger, State Board of Community and Technical Colleges; Alex Davidson, The Associated Students of the University of Washington; Zachary Glenn, University of Washington; Hannah Whobrey, University of Washington Food Pantry; and Yadira Chavez, Community for Our Colleges.

Persons Testifying (Appropriations): Bryce McKibben, The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice; Joseph-Gabriel Burke, Washington Student Association; Collin Bannister, Associated Students of Washington State University Pullman; Jennifer Dellinger, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; and Nora Selander, Western Washington University.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Postsecondary Education & Workforce): None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Appropriations): None.