

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1559

As of March 21, 2023

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: Passed House: 3/3/23, 57-40.

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 3/15/23 [DP-WM, w/oRec].

Ways & Means: 3/21/23.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates student basic needs task forces at the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (state board), each of the public four-year institutions of higher education, and the tribal college.
- Establishes the Benefits Navigator Grant Program at the state board.
- Creates the Free and Reduced-Price Meals Pilot Program.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Randall, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair; Liias.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Holy, Ranking Member; Hawkins.

Staff: Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

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.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Michele Alishahi (786-7433)

Background: The United Way of King County (UWKC) has identified that postsecondary students face food insecurity, housing insecurity, and other basic needs insecurities. In response to these needs, UWKC launched the bridge to finish campaign creating campus-based benefits hubs across ten participating institutions. The access hubs provide a single coordinated access point for basic needs support services. Services include access to food, monetary support, and coaching.

In 2021, the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) released a report showing that 41 percent of community college students in Washington faced food insecurity in 2019.

Summary of Bill: Student Basic Needs Task Forces. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (state board), each of the public four years, and the tribal college must each establish a Student Basic Needs Task Force (Task Force) to develop a Hunger-Free Campus Strategic Plan (plan). The Task Force must:

- collect and disseminate results of the biennial student basic needs survey developed by WSAC;
- design a benefits hub to assist students in accessing public benefits, emergency financial resources, and other resources using a full-time navigator;
- ensure access to a campus food pantry;
- conduct outreach targeted at likely low-income and food insecure students; and
- identify opportunities for community partnerships.

The task force administered by the state board must identify how many full-time benefits navigators are necessary to adequately assist students at colleges with Benefits Resource Hubs.

Benefits Navigator Grant Program. Subject to appropriations, the state board must design and implement a Basic Needs Grant Program to provide funding for implementation of the student basic needs task forces.

Pilot Program to Provide Free and Reduced-price Meals. Subject to appropriations, a pilot program to provide free and low-cost meal plans or vouchers is created. Four college districts, two on each side of the cascade crest and selected by the state board; and two public four-year institutions of higher education, one on each side of the cascade crest chosen by an organization representing the presidents of the public four-year institutions of higher education may participate in the pilot program. The pilot program expires July 1, 2026.

Appropriation: The bill contains a null and void clause requiring specific funding be provided in an omnibus appropriation act.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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 (Higher Education & Workforce Development):
No public hearing was held.

Persons Testifying (Higher Education & Workforce Development): N/A

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Higher Education & Workforce Development): N/A

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: This is a bill who's time has come. Students have been struggling to pay non-tuition costs for a long time. The effect of student struggling with basic needs is they struggle to get into school, succeed once there, and ultimately get a job. We urge you to pass this student success and workforce bill. This is an investment in creating more opportunities for students and providing necessary resources to help them complete. Poverty is the most significant factor in student retention and completion. Students don't just struggle with their courses, they also struggle with finding ways to access the resources they need. However you look at the data, student basic needs is a problem. Students who have access to benefits navigators are 25 percent more likely to complete. Tuition is a mere fraction of the cost of attendance. The problem is not always a lack of resources, but instead a lack of accessible resources. Needs hubs would build on existing good work to get students the resources they need so that they have more bandwidth for the important work they are doing. I've seen friends and classmates leave school because they can't afford to eat. This bill will make it easier for students to focus on their studies so they don't have to worry about where their next meal or place to sleep will come from.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Bryce McKibben, The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice; Jackson Feaster; Jennifer Dellinger, State Board for Community & Technical Colleges; Mariela Barriga, Highline College; Adán Mendoza, Washington Student Association; Bryson Walb; Jacqui Cain.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.