

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5703

As of February 20, 2023

Title: An act relating to modifying the Washington college grant and establishing bridge grants.

Brief Description: Modifying the Washington college grant and establishing bridge grants.

Sponsors: Senators Randall, Holy, Conway, Hasegawa, Keiser, Lias, Lovick, Nguyen, Nobles, Pedersen, Saldaña, Salomon, Shewmake, Valdez and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/08/23, 2/15/23
[DPS-WM].

Ways & Means: 2/20/23.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Increases eligibility for the maximum Washington College Grant (WCG) award up to 70 percent of median family income.
- Entitles WCG students who are receiving the maximum WCG award to a bridge grant, which is an additional annual stipend for expenses beyond tuition and fees.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5703 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Randall, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Member; Hawkins and Lias.

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: Washington College Grant. The State Need Grant was modified in 2019, and renamed the Washington College Grant (WCG). The WCG is the state's largest financial aid program, and provides awards to low-income students to pursue postsecondary education. The WCG is an entitlement program with guaranteed awards for those students who qualify. The WCG award amount varies based on the institution the student attends and the student's family income. For example, for students attending the state's public institutions, the maximum award is tuition and services and activities fees for 15 quarter credit hours or the equivalent. For students attending private, four-year, not-for-profit higher education institutions, in 2019-20 the maximum award was \$9,739. An eligible student may receive a WCG for five years or up to 125 percent of the published length of the student's program. Part-time students receive prorated awards.

Bridge Grant. In the 2022 supplemental operating budget state funding was provided for a Bridge Grant of \$500 for WCG recipients receiving the maximum award. A student is eligible for the Bridge Grant if the student receives the maximum WCG award and does not receive the College Bound Scholarship. The Grant is an annual stipend awarded in addition to the WCG to provide supplementary financial support to low-income students to cover higher education expenses beyond tuition and fees, such as books, lab fees, supplies, technology, transportation, housing, and childcare.

Summary of Bill (First Substitute): Washington College Grant. Beginning with academic year 2023-24, the following WCG income eligibility thresholds and award amounts apply:

Median Family Income (MFI)	Award Amount
0-70 percent of state MFI	maximum award
71-80 percent of state MFI	50 percent of maximum award
81-90 percent of state MFI	25 percent of maximum award
91-100 percent of state MFI	10 percent of maximum award

Bridge Grants. Bridge grants are annual stipends provided in addition to the WCG to provide supplementary financial support to low-income students to cover higher education expenses beyond tuition and fees.

Beginning with the 2023-24 academic year, WCG recipients who are receiving a maximum WCG award are also entitled to receive a bridge grant.

The bridge grant award amounts are as follows:

- for WCG recipients who are also recipients of the College Bound Scholarship, the

- bridge grant is \$500 annually; or
- for WCG recipients who are not College Bound Scholarship recipients, the bridge grant is \$1,000 annually.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (First Substitute):

- Modifies the effective date for bridge grants to 2023-24.
- No longer requires the bridge grants to be prorated across terms.

Appropriation: None.

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 on Original Bill (Higher Education & Workforce Development): *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: This opens doorways to opportunities to ensure were growing to the strongest possible future for our community. The pandemic showed our workforce challenges are growing. Underrepresented families continued to get pushed to the margins. Everything that can be done to invest in those furthest from access and opportunity is to the benefit of everyone. Every Washingtonian should have the opportunity to improve their socioeconomic status. Increasing the eligibility for the maximum reward up to 70 percent of the MFI and providing bridge grants will ensure equity. The increase of this grant is vital to support low-income students. Accessing a post-secondary credential without outstanding debts will allow students to excel in their lives. This is an investment in students, families, and businesses. This is a light for those looking to raise families out of poverty. Thirteen-thousand more people will receive this grant through this bill. Recognizing the rising costs, this positions more students to be more successful pursuing their dreams. The current grant has the benefit cliff. A small increase in income can cost students thousands in tuition. This should be more like a Pell Grant with a smooth phase out instead of a cliff.

Persons Testifying (Higher Education & Workforce Development): PRO: Senator Emily Randall, Prime Sponsor; Adán Jr. Mendoza-Sandoval, VP, WA Student Association; Nancy Canales-Montiel, Executive Director, WA Students Association; Paris rosas, communities for our colleges; Samuel Ligon, Eastern Washington University Faculty; Jacob Vigdor, University of Washington Faculty; Madeline Sprute, Associated Students of Tacoma Community College; Nancy Cruz, Community For Our College; Nāvouny Divinne De Nile; Reika Sasano; Danya Vargas Almejo; Heather Hudson, Washington Student Achievement Council; Sopenara Chay, South Puget Sound Community College; Greyson Wolfe, Student from South Puget Sound Community College; Alex Davidson, The

Associated Students of the University of Washington; Timothy Billing, ASUW President; Diana Rios, ASWSU; Martell Naranjo, Associated Students of Tacoma Community College; Josh Rhynes, Associated Students of Tacoma Community College; Haley Pistole; Joseph Gabriel Burke, Director of Governmental Affairs, Associated Students of Central Washington University; Alec Acosta-Vega, Associated Students of Central Washington University; Michelle Carrillo, Associated Students of Central Washington University; Jessica Smith; Naira Gonzales Aranda, Associated Students of Western Washington University; Collin Bannister, ASWSU.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Higher Education & Workforce Development): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: Cost is a significant barrier to higher education. The college grant/bridge grant program extends access to higher education to students without the means. An increasing number of jobs require college degrees, yet Washington does not have the necessary assistance programs to help students achieve these degrees. If college is required to be a working adult and functioning member of Washington's democracy, it needs to be accessible to everyone.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Yokiko Hayashi-Saguil, SBCTC; Nancy Canales-Montiel, Director, WA Student Association.

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