

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6165

---

---

As Passed Senate, February 10, 2004

**Title:** An act relating to allowing the higher education coordinating board to establish rules for promise scholarship awards to individuals with special needs.

**Brief Description:** Allowing the higher education coordinating board to establish rules for promise scholarship awards to individuals with special needs.

**Sponsors:** Senators Benton, Carlson, Kohl-Welles, Roach, Rasmussen and Parlette.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education: 1/26/04 [DP].

Passed Senate: 2/10/04, 48-0.

---

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Carlson, Chair; Schmidt, Vice Chair; Horn, Kohl-Welles, Pflug, B. Sheldon and Shin.

**Staff:** Heather Lewis-Lechner (786-7448)

**Background:** The Washington State Promise Scholarship program was established by statute in 2002 to provide financial assistance to academically successful students from low and middle income families. The Higher Education Coordinating Board is given the authority by state law to coordinate state financial aid programs, including the Promise Scholarship.

To be eligible for a Washington Promise Scholarship, individuals must meet both academic and an income eligibility criteria. To meet the academic criteria, students must graduate in the top 15 percent of their public or private high school class or score at least 1,200 points on the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) or 27 points on the American College Test (ACT) on the first attempt. Persons 21 years of age or younger who have received a GED certificate may meet the academic eligibility criteria by scoring the required scores on the SAT or ACT on their first attempt. The income eligibility criteria requires that the individual's family income not exceed 135 percent of the state's median family income. Currently 135 percent of the state's median family income is \$89,000 for a family of four.

The scholarships may only be used for undergraduate coursework at accredited higher education institutions in Washington.

**Summary of Bill:** The Higher Education Coordinating Board is given the authority to allow the Promise Scholarship to be used for undergraduate coursework at Oregon and Idaho higher education institutions that are located in counties adjacent to the Washington border. This authority may only be exercised for the purpose of accommodating otherwise eligible students

who have special needs due to documented disabilities. The board may develop the necessary rules for acceptable documentation of disabilities and special needs.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** Currently, the Higher Education Coordinating Board has the ability to allow students to use the Promise Scholarship at universities in Oregon that are in a border county if the student is pursuing a program that is not available at an institution in Washington. This authority, however, is very limited and recently the board found that it did not have the authority to award a Promise Scholarship to a student covered by the provisions of this bill. This bill serves a legitimate need.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Bruce Botka, HECB.