
SENATE BILL 5249

State of Washington 58th Legislature 2003 Regular Session

By Senators Kohl-Welles, Shin, Carlson and Schmidt

Read first time 01/20/2003. Referred to Committee on Higher Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to the higher education for lifelong progress
2 program; amending RCW 74.08A.250; adding new sections to chapter 74.08A
3 RCW; and creating new sections.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that recent studies
6 show a powerful relationship between postsecondary education and an
7 increase in lifetime earned income. Even two years of college can
8 equate to a quarter of a million dollar increase in lifetime income.
9 A bachelor's degree can boost annual income seventy-three percent,
10 compared to a high school degree. In addition, studies indicate that
11 for individuals attending college, there is a correlation with improved
12 health status, increased civic participation, improved savings rates,
13 less reliance on government assistance, and improved quality of life
14 for their children. Additionally, this correlates to increased tax
15 revenues and reduced crime rates for society. The legislature finds
16 that some welfare recipients could qualify for college admission and
17 benefit from completion of their higher education at a community,
18 trade, or technical college, or other institution of higher education.

1 The federal government has specifically encouraged creative
2 approaches to higher education for welfare recipients, and several
3 other states have enacted legislation to this end. Even in a
4 recession, there is a shortage of skilled workers. An estimated
5 thirty-three thousand six hundred ninety-three firms had difficulty
6 finding applicants with vocational certificates or degrees. Among
7 Washington employers looking to hire workers with postsecondary
8 vocational training, eighty-three percent reported difficulty finding
9 qualified applicants. The shortage of skilled workers negatively
10 impacts Washington's economy, lowering output and sales, and reducing
11 the quality of their products and services. The shortage of skilled
12 workers in high-demand fields is particularly acute and skill
13 requirements and workforce shortages are expected to continue to
14 increase. In 2001, Washington hospitals reported a shortage of two
15 thousand registered nurses, and fifty-five percent of emergency
16 departments turned away patients because they did not have enough
17 staff. In order to close the postsecondary skills gap, Washington will
18 need significantly more advanced workers in the coming months and
19 years. Therefore, enabling welfare clients to achieve their
20 educational goals will help solve this problem.

21 In 1999, the federal government adopted final regulations for
22 temporary assistance for needy families, allowing expanded use of block
23 grant and maintenance of effort funds. These funds can be used
24 creatively for a variety of special approaches, to help poor families
25 achieve true financial independence.

26 The legislature intends to provide access to postsecondary
27 education for qualified adult recipients of temporary assistance for
28 needy families, while maintaining the emphasis on employment that is
29 the hallmark of the WorkFirst program. The legislature intends to
30 provide temporary assistance for needy families grants, including
31 working connections child care and tuition assistance, to college-
32 qualified individuals, with the goal of providing a means for highly
33 motivated welfare recipients to complete college, exit assistance, and
34 secure careers to benefit themselves, their families, and society.

35 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** Unless the context clearly requires
36 otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout sections 2
37 through 9 and 11 of this act.

1 (1) "HELP program" means the higher education for lifelong progress
2 program.

3 (2) "Institution of higher education" means the state research
4 universities, the regional universities, The Evergreen State College,
5 the community colleges, the technical colleges, and private career
6 schools, colleges, and universities.

7 (3) "State board" means the state board for community and technical
8 colleges.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The department shall establish the HELP
10 program. The goal of the program is to help college-qualified parents
11 who have dependent children, who are in need and are eligible for
12 temporary assistance for needy families, receive up to two years of
13 undergraduate education or training. To the extent that funds are
14 specifically appropriated for this purpose up to a maximum enrollment
15 of six hundred, the department shall provide parents accepted into or
16 enrolled at an institution of higher education in Washington state with
17 assistance that includes their temporary assistance for needy families
18 cash grants, as well as the other support services provided to
19 recipients of temporary assistance for needy families, including but
20 not limited to medical assistance, working connections child care, food
21 stamps, tuition assistance based upon actual tuition or public higher
22 education tuition rates, whichever is less, and other support services.
23 The department may facilitate access to Pell grants and state need
24 grants.

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) Families that qualify for temporary
26 assistance for needy families under this chapter may participate in the
27 HELP program as a countable work activity of the temporary assistance
28 for needy families program. Eligibility for assistance and the amount
29 of assistance shall be determined under criteria used in the temporary
30 assistance for needy families program. Because participation in the
31 HELP program satisfies the countable work activity requirement, the
32 department shall not impose an additional work requirement upon HELP
33 participants.

34 (2) To the extent that funds and participant slots are available,
35 enrollment in the program shall be granted by the department if the
36 applicant intends to pursue higher education in a program, including

1 the necessary prerequisites, that is likely to result in employment in
2 a field designated by the state board as high-wage/high-demand, as
3 posted on the state board's web site.

4 (3) The state board shall develop a list of programs designated as
5 high-wage/high-demand for each region of the state that takes into
6 account regional variations in the local labor market and shall post
7 the lists on its web site. The state board shall review and update
8 these lists annually.

9 (4) Students receiving assistance under this section shall meet the
10 following requirements:

11 (a) They must be accepted into a postsecondary program;

12 (b) They must be enrolled full time, with the expectation that they
13 make satisfactory progress toward a degree, certificate, or license in
14 a high-wage/high-demand field as defined by lists prepared by the state
15 board. Satisfactory progress may be defined by the standards of the
16 institution of higher education where the student is enrolled; and

17 (c) They must meet the requirements for the state need grant under
18 RCW 28B.10.800 through 28B.10.820.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** The department shall recommend that
20 applicants obtain career planning and counseling services from their
21 educational institutions to assist them in choosing an educational plan
22 that is likely to lead to self-sufficiency, and shall provide to
23 students who have begun an educational program assistance to overcome
24 barriers to completing the program and becoming employed. The
25 department may work with other state, local, and private entities to
26 provide the planning and counseling services.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** The department shall inform all persons
28 applying for or participating in the temporary assistance for needy
29 families program of the option to apply for the HELP program and the
30 criteria for acceptance. Recipients of temporary assistance for needy
31 families who have already partially completed their postsecondary
32 education are encouraged to apply and shall be given priority.

33 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** To the extent permitted by federal law,
34 assistance received under sections 2 through 9 of this act must be
35 disregarded as income and excluded as a resource or asset to the same

1 extent as assistance under the temporary assistance for needy families
2 program under this chapter, for the purposes of any state, federal,
3 tribal, or municipal assistance program. Assistance received under
4 sections 2 through 9 of this act must be treated in the same manner as
5 assistance received under the temporary assistance for needy families
6 program under this chapter for all tax purposes. The department shall
7 implement the program so participants qualify for food stamps until
8 completion of their degree or certificate.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** (1) The department shall contract with the
10 Washington state institute for public policy for the performance of an
11 outcome study of HELP program participants. The study shall, at a
12 minimum:

- 13 (a) Track degree or certificate completion by participants;
- 14 (b) Report on wage progression of participants;
- 15 (c) Report on the program's dropout rate, including temporary
16 assistance for needy families' recidivism;
- 17 (d) Quantify the projected increase in lifetime earnings of program
18 graduates; and
- 19 (e) Report on self-identified enhancers and barriers to success in
20 postsecondary education experience by the study population.

21 (2) The results of the outcome study shall be reported annually, no
22 later than January 15th, beginning in 2005, to the governor and to the
23 appropriate committees of the legislature.

24 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 9.** Participation in the HELP program shall be
25 incorporated in the recipient's individual personal responsibility
26 plan, in a manner that clearly indicates that satisfactory progress in
27 college is the recipient's temporary assistance for needy families work
28 activity and responsibility.

29 **Sec. 10.** RCW 74.08A.250 and 2000 c 10 s 1 are each amended to read
30 as follows:

31 Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, as used in this
32 chapter, "work activity" means:

- 33 (1) Unsubsidized paid employment in the private or public sector;
- 34 (2) Subsidized paid employment in the private or public sector,

1 including employment through the state or federal work-study program
2 for a period not to exceed twenty-four months;

3 (3) Work experience, including:

4 (a) An internship or practicum, that is paid or unpaid and is
5 required to complete a course of vocational training or to obtain a
6 license or certificate in a high demand field, as determined by the
7 (~~employment security department~~) state board for community and
8 technical colleges. No internship or practicum shall exceed twelve
9 months; or

10 (b) Work associated with the refurbishing of publicly assisted
11 housing, if sufficient paid employment is not available;

12 (4) On-the-job training;

13 (5) Job search and job readiness assistance;

14 (6) Community service programs;

15 (7) Vocational educational training, not to exceed twelve months
16 with respect to any individual;

17 (8) Job skills training directly related to employment;

18 (9) Education directly related to employment, in the case of a
19 recipient who has not received a high school diploma or a GED;

20 (10) Satisfactory attendance at secondary school or in a course of
21 study leading to a GED, in the case of a recipient who has not
22 completed secondary school or received such a certificate;

23 (11) The provision of child care services to an individual who is
24 participating in a community service program;

25 (12) Internships, that shall be paid or unpaid work experience
26 performed by an intern in a business, industry, or government or
27 nongovernmental agency setting;

28 (13) Practicums, which include any educational program in which a
29 student is working under the close supervision of a professional in an
30 agency, clinic, or other professional practice setting for purposes of
31 advancing their skills and knowledge; (~~and~~)

32 (14) Services required by the recipient under RCW 74.08.025(3) and
33 74.08A.010(3) to become employable; and

34 (15) Participation in the higher education for lifelong progress
35 program.

36 NEW SECTION. Sec. 11. The department and the state board shall
37 adopt rules to implement sections 2 through 9 of this act.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 12.** Sections 2 through 9 and 11 of this act are
2 each added to chapter 74.08A RCW.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 13.** If any part of this act is found to be in
4 conflict with federal requirements that are a prescribed condition to
5 the allocation of federal funds to the state, the conflicting part of
6 this act is inoperative solely to the extent of the conflict and with
7 respect to the agencies directly affected, and this finding does not
8 affect the operation of the remainder of this act in its application to
9 the agencies concerned. Rules adopted under this act must meet federal
10 requirements that are a necessary condition to the receipt of federal
11 funds by the state.

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