

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5638

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to state need grant eligibility.

Brief Description: Changing state need grant eligibility provisions.

Sponsors: Senators Hasegawa, Roach, Kohl-Welles, Chase, Keiser and McAuliffe.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 3/18/15, 3/26/15 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Modifies the requirements of the State Need Grant program to make the grant available to students enrolled or accepted for enrollment at a qualifying institution of higher education for at least three quarter credits, or the equivalent semester credits.
- Removes a provision relating to an expired pilot program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Zeiger, Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Gregory, Hargrove, Holy, Reykdal, Sells, Stambaugh, Tarleton and Van Werven.

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

The primary purpose of the State Need Grant (SNG), established in 1969, is to provide an opportunity for low-income, needy, and disadvantaged Washington residents to attend an institution of higher education in the state. Before 1990 the SNG was available only to students enrolled full-time (12 quarter credits, or the equivalent semester credits). In 1990 the Legislature extended the SNG to students enrolled at least half-time (six quarter credits, or the equivalent semester credits).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

In 2005 the Legislature directed the former Higher Education Coordinating Board to develop a two-year pilot project to assess the need for and funding requirements that would be necessary to expand student eligibility for the SNG program. Under the pilot project, students enrolled in four or five quarter hours, or equivalent enrollment, were eligible for the SNG as long as they also met the other eligibility criteria for the program. In 2007 the Legislature extended the SNG to students enrolled for at least three quarter credits, or the equivalent semester credits, on a provisional basis. The pilot program expired on June 30, 2011.

Under the 2013-15 Operating Budget, eligibility for the SNG includes students enrolled in three to five quarter credits, or the equivalent semester credits.

Summary of Bill:

Students are eligible for the SNG if they are enrolled or accepted for enrollment at a qualifying institution of higher education for at least three quarter credits, or the equivalent semester credits, rather than on at least a half-time basis.

The expired pilot program allowing less-than-half-time students to be eligible for the SNG program is removed from statute.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The contents of this bill have been around for a long time. Every biennium the bill has been implemented as a budget proviso, rather than a statutory change. There is lots of evidence to support the bill. Most students attending less than half-time do so for only one term. The state has invested a lot into these low-income students; it is important to keep them in school and with the momentum to continue. This bill would provide no additional cost to the SNG. It is the Washington Student Achievement Council's recommendation to make this change permanent. This bill allows students to keep their momentum going even when life gets hard. Students who use this option do not get the full award and most go back to part or full time after one term. This bill also allows students to take only one class at a time, while trying to hold down a job, take care of their family, etc. This bill helps these students become trained and educated and helps them pay for it. Some students have to take classes they do not need just to maintain full-time enrollment. This bill would fix that.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Hasegawa, prime sponsor; Rachelle Sharpe, Washington Student Achievement Council; Scott Copeland, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Nova Gattman, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; and Paul Bell, Students of Bellevue College.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.