

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6274

As of January 22, 2018

Title: An act relating to helping former foster youth and youth experiencing homelessness access and complete registered apprenticeships.

Brief Description: Helping foster and homeless youth complete apprenticeships.

Sponsors: Senators Ranker, Palumbo, Keiser, Wellman, Darneille, Liias, Kuderer, Hasegawa, Hunt and Saldaña.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/18/18.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the Passport to Careers program administered by the Washington Student Achievement Council.
- Establishes a program of financial assistance for foster youth, or youth who have experienced homelessness, to pursue registered apprenticeships.
- Expands the Passport to College Promise program to include individuals who've experienced homelessness, and to those who have spent time in a tribal or federal foster care system.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Kellee Gunn (786-7429)

Background: Passport to College Promise. In 2007, the Legislature established a scholarship called the Passport to College Promise for students who have emancipated from the state foster care system after having spent at least one year in care after their 16th birthday. To qualify for the scholarship, a student must:

- be a Washington resident;
- be enrolled at least halftime in an institution of higher education by the age of 21;
- be making satisfactory academic progress towards a degree or certificate program;
- not have earned a bachelor's or professional degree; and

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- not pursue a degree in theology.

The scholarship cannot exceed undergraduate resident tuition and fees at the highest priced public institution in the state and may not exceed the student's financial need when combined with other public and private grants, scholarship, and waiver assistance. An eligible student may receive the scholarship for a maximum of five years after the student first enrolls, or until age 26, whichever occurs first.

The Washington Student Achievement Council (Council) administers the Passport to College Promise scholarship program. In the 2016-17 academic year, the Council awarded 335 scholarships.

The Passport to College Promise scholarship is set expire on June 30, 2022.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute): Passport to Careers. The Passport to Careers program is established. Passport to Careers must support two scholarships; the Passport to College Promise scholarship program and a new scholarship program called the Passport to Apprenticeship Opportunities program. The Passport to Careers program must provide financial support and financial assistance to former foster and homeless youth in pursuing postsecondary options in higher education or a registered apprenticeship. Passport to careers must assist with the costs of a public undergraduate college education or with meeting registered apprenticeship program minimum qualifications and occupational-specific costs. Supportive services must help them apply, register for, and complete a registered apprenticeship. Homeless is defined as without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as set forth in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.

Eligibility for Passport to Careers Programs. Students may be eligible for supplemental scholarship and student assistance if they:

- spent at least one day in state, tribal, or federal foster care or experienced homelessness subsequent to their 13th birthday;
- are under the age of 21;
- are a resident student;
- are enrolled at least half-time with an institution of higher education or with a registered apprenticeship or recognized pre-apprenticeship;
- are making satisfactory academic progress toward completion of a degree, certificate program, or registered apprenticeship or recognized pre-apprenticeship;
- have verified their homelessness status with the Council; and
- have not earned a bachelor's or professional degree.

Passport to Apprenticeship Opportunities. The Passport to Apprenticeship Opportunities program must be administered by the Council. Applicants are eligible for:

- financial support that does not exceed financial need defined by the Council and involved entities; and
- a maximum of six years of financial support after first enrolling with a registered apprenticeship, or until the applicant turns 26, whichever some first.

Passport to College Promise Eligibility Expansion. The Passport to College Promise is expanded to include youth who have experienced homelessness and individuals who have spent a day or more in state, federal, or tribal foster care. The expiration date of the Passport to College Promise program is repealed.

Agency outreach and collaboration in Passport to Careers. The Department of Social and Health Services, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families and the Department of Commerce's Office of Homeless Youth (OHY) must devise and implement ways to identify students and applicants who may be eligible. Information must be shared among the other agencies and entities involved.

The OHY must work with the other state agencies currently involved with the Passport to College Promise program in contracting with a nongovernmental entity to develop, implement, and administer a program of supplemental education transition planning for youth in foster care and youth experiencing homelessness. The supplemental transition planning must include establishing post-secondary plan initiation in coordination with the Passports to Careers program.

The Council must develop and maintain a website and outreach program to serve as a portal for Passport to Careers eligible youth. In addition to information that is currently available, the outreach and website must include how and when to apply for a registered apprenticeship, or pre-apprenticeship, and detailed sources of financial assistance available to homeless youth.

The Council, with approval from the employment security department and the apprenticeship council, must contract with at least one nongovernmental entity to provide quality training, employment navigation, and supportive services to disadvantaged populations seeking to complete apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships through the Passport to Apprenticeship Opportunities program. The nongovernmental entity must disburse funds to eligible applicants to meet registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship entrance requirements and occupational-specific costs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 17, 2018.

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 Proposed Substitute: PRO: This bill expands on the Passport to College program by starting the eligibility for the program at 13 years old, including kids experiencing homelessness, and expanding the opportunities to include apprenticeship programs. Let us make this not only a passport to college, but make this a passport to a career.

Youth can benefit a great deal through the work to learn model. The Community and Technical College (CTC) system are critical partners to the apprenticeship system. That system is about closing equity gaps. Foster and homeless youth experience disproportionate amount of homelessness and poverty. Apprenticeship programs have different types of costs. This bill covers the cost of tools, work clothing, and transportation in addition to tuition and fees. Of the 34 CTCs, 21 have active apprenticeship programs. I wish this bill had been passed years ago when I was a foster child. Apprenticeships work because you earn while you learn—and allows for self-reliance. Apprenticeships assist people in establishing long-term careers.

It can be difficult for foster youth to get financial aid. Intelligence and determination is not what foster youth lack. They need wraparound support in addition to financial aid. Youth from foster care face the most difficult odds in earning a postsecondary degree of any youth subgroup. The passport model, which combines financial aid with other student support, is effective. The more foster youth who graduate high school and earn a postsecondary credential mean more financially independent adults. Historically, data-sharing agreements to facilitate the systematic ability to share student information efficiently and confidentially among agencies has been problematic and we recommend looking closely at that language.

This bill addresses a gap in postsecondary support for homeless students interested in pursuing postsecondary opportunities. There are some technical issues. There are concerns with the bill regarding the system's capacity of postsecondary institutions to support students experiencing homelessness, homeless student eligibility for the program, and the Office of Homeless Youth having the primary responsibility of identifying the youth eligible for this program. OSPI should be involved in identifying these students. This bill is very much in alignment with WSAC's priorities. Everyone, especially disenfranchised populations, should have access to postsecondary credentials.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kevin Ranker, Prime Sponsor; Peter Guzman, State Board for Community & Technical Colleges; Juliette Schindler Kelly, Director of Government Relations, College Success Foundation; Katara Jordan, Building Changes; Maddy Thompson, Washington Student Achievement Council; Sharon Stukalo, apprentice electrician; Sabian Hart-Wall, The Mockingbird Society; Johnathan Hemphill, The Mockingbird Society.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.