
SENATE BILL 5666

State of Washington 65th Legislature 2017 Regular Session

By Senators Frockt, Palumbo, Nelson, Keiser, and Saldaña

Read first time 02/01/17. Referred to Committee on Higher Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing the Washington promise program,
2 which provides for affordable access to community and technical
3 colleges; amending RCW 43.88C.010; adding a new chapter to Title 28B
4 RCW; providing an effective date; and declaring an emergency.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The Washington promise program is
7 established to help make the first two years of college affordable
8 and accessible to all citizens of the state of Washington by offering
9 a tuition waiver for eligible students enrolled in associate degree
10 or certificate programs offered by Washington's community and
11 technical colleges. The purpose of the program is to encourage more
12 Washington residents who have not yet earned an associate's degree to
13 enroll in and successfully complete an associate's degree or
14 certificate that will lead to opportunities for further education and
15 jobs. By making a higher education credential more affordable and
16 accessible, Washington will make more progress towards the
17 legislature's attainment goal of seventy percent of Washington adults
18 having a postsecondary credential by 2023.

19 The legislature recognizes that increasing the number of
20 residents with associate degrees will lead to increased attainment

1 for higher level degrees as students may transfer to comprehensive or
2 research universities.

3 It is the intent of the legislature to implement the Washington
4 promise program in phases, starting with a free thirteenth year. The
5 legislature recognizes that free thirteenth year and promise programs
6 are proven to significantly increase high school graduation rates by
7 ensuring all high school graduates know they can attend a community
8 or technical college regardless of their family incomes. Thus,
9 investment in these programs is an evidence-based means to improve
10 high school graduation rates and to reduce, or even eliminate,
11 opportunity gaps in postsecondary education for students from
12 underrepresented minority groups, for low-income students, for foster
13 youth, and for students with disabilities.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The definitions in this section apply
15 throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires
16 otherwise.

17 (1) "Board" means the state board for community and technical
18 colleges.

19 (2) "Community or technical college" means the community or
20 technical colleges governed under chapter 28B.50 RCW.

21 (3) "Eligible degree or certificate program" means:

22 (a) An associate degree program;

23 (b) Academic programs with credits that can fully transfer via an
24 articulation agreement toward a baccalaureate degree or
25 postbaccalaureate degree at an institution of higher education; or

26 (c) Professional and technical programs that lead to a recognized
27 postsecondary credential.

28 (4) "Gift aid" means financial aid received from the federal Pell
29 grant, the state need grant program under chapter 28B.92 RCW, the
30 college bound scholarship program under chapter 28B.118 RCW, the
31 opportunity grant program under chapter 28B.50 RCW, the opportunity
32 scholarship program under chapter 28B.145 RCW, or any other state
33 grant or scholarship program that provides funds for educational
34 purposes with no obligation of repayment. "Gift aid" does not include
35 student loans and work-study programs.

36 (5) "Office" means the office of student financial assistance.

37 (6) "Program" means the Washington promise program.

38 (7) "Resident student" means a student who is a resident student
39 as defined in RCW 28B.15.012.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) Subject to availability of amounts
2 appropriated for this specific purpose, the office shall administer
3 the Washington promise program for resident students seeking an
4 associate's degree or certificate from a community or technical
5 college under the terms and conditions in this section.

6 (2) To be eligible for the program, a resident student who has
7 not previously earned an associate's degree must be enrolled in a
8 community or technical college in an eligible degree or certificate
9 program.

10 (3) Students must complete the free application for federal
11 student aid (FAFSA) or the Washington application for state financial
12 aid each academic year in which they seek eligibility for the
13 program.

14 (4) To remain eligible for the program, once a student has earned
15 forty-five credits, the student must maintain a cumulative grade
16 point average of 2.0.

17 (5) For the 2018-19 and 2019-20 academic years, eligible students
18 shall receive an award for a free thirteenth year, or three academic
19 quarters, if they meet the following requirements:

20 (a) Have graduated high school within the past six calendar
21 months before enrolling in a community or technical college; and

22 (b) Have a family income that does not exceed seventy percent of
23 the state median family income, adjusted for family size.

24 (6) For the 2020-21 academic year, eligible students shall
25 receive an award for six academic quarters if they meet the following
26 requirements:

27 (a) Have obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent within
28 the past six calendar months before enrolling in a community or
29 technical college; and

30 (b) Have a family income that does not exceed seventy percent of
31 the state median family income, adjusted for family size.

32 (7) For the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years, eligible students
33 shall receive an award for six academic quarters if they meet the
34 following requirements:

35 (a) Have obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent within
36 the past sixteen calendar months before enrolling in a community or
37 technical college; and

38 (b) Have a family income that does not exceed the state median
39 family income, adjusted for family size.

1 (8) Beginning with the 2023-24 academic year, eligible students
2 shall receive an award for six academic quarters if they meet the
3 following requirements:

4 (a) Have obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent; and

5 (b) Have a family income that does not exceed the state median
6 family income, adjusted for family size.

7 (9)(a) The office shall award grants to eligible students for an
8 amount up to the cost of tuition and fees as defined in RCW
9 28B.15.020, and services and activities fees as defined in RCW
10 28B.15.041, less all other gift aid. The student shall also receive a
11 cost of attendance stipend if the student meets the criteria in (b)
12 of this subsection. The calculation in this subsection (9)(a) shall
13 not result in a reduction of gift aid.

14 (b) Up to one thousand five hundred dollars for books and other
15 related higher education expenses must be provided as a stipend to
16 students with a family income that does not exceed seventy percent of
17 the state median family income. If a student eligible for the stipend
18 under this subsection (9)(b) is enrolled less than full time, the
19 student must receive a prorated portion of the stipend based on the
20 number of credits in which the student is enrolled.

21 (10) By December 1, 2019, and annually by December 1st
22 thereafter, the board shall report to the appropriate policy and
23 fiscal committees of the legislature on the following impacts of the
24 program:

25 (a) Student enrollment in the eligible degree or certificate
26 programs;

27 (b) Student completion rates of credits, certificates, and
28 degrees;

29 (c) The cost of implementation, including the cost per student;

30 (d) Additional resources used to meet student needs, such as
31 counseling, precollege courses, child care, or transportation; and

32 (e) The number of students receiving wraparound services, the
33 number of schools providing wraparound services, and the resources
34 needed to provide wraparound services.

35 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** The board shall develop a plan to provide
36 all program students who are enrolled at a community or technical
37 college with a quarter-long student success course, during or before
38 their first enrollment period, that teaches essential skills for
39 college success. Essential skills may include tips for study habits

1 and time management, financial aid information and resources,
2 connecting students with advisors, encouraging student mentoring,
3 helping establish student cohorts, and providing information about
4 services available on campus. The plan must address how the board
5 will ensure that students receiving a Washington promise program
6 grant are enrolled in such a course during or before their first
7 quarter of eligibility. The board shall provide the plan to the
8 relevant committees of the legislature by December 1, 2018, and begin
9 implementation of the plan for the 2019-20 academic year.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** The Washington state institute for public
11 policy shall conduct a study on the effectiveness of the Washington
12 promise program, including but not limited to: Any increase in
13 enrollments in community or technical colleges; any decreases in
14 enrollments elsewhere in institutions of higher education; changes in
15 student persistence, completion, and time-to-degree rates in eligible
16 degree or certificate programs; and any change in need or delivery of
17 student services. The analysis shall include the fiscal impact of the
18 program on the students, community and technical colleges, and state.
19 The Washington state institute for public policy shall report its
20 findings to the relevant committees of the legislature by December 1,
21 2023.

22 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** The caseload forecast council shall
23 estimate the anticipated caseload of the program and submit this
24 forecast as required in RCW 43.88C.020.

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** The board may adopt rules to implement
26 this chapter.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** If the legislature does not appropriate
28 enough funding to support the statewide implementation of section
29 3(5) of this act, the board shall provide grants to community or
30 technical college districts to implement the free thirteenth year of
31 the program. The community or technical college districts shall
32 partner with local governments and private entities to secure
33 matching funding for the free thirteenth year. The board shall adopt
34 criteria for the grants, prioritizing aid for at-risk students and
35 programs with funding partners.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 9.** This chapter may be known and cited as the
2 Washington promise program.

3 **Sec. 10.** RCW 43.88C.010 and 2015 c 128 s 2 are each amended to
4 read as follows:

5 (1) The caseload forecast council is hereby created. The council
6 shall consist of two individuals appointed by the governor and four
7 individuals, one of whom is appointed by the chairperson of each of
8 the two largest political caucuses in the senate and house of
9 representatives. The chair of the council shall be selected from
10 among the four caucus appointees. The council may select such other
11 officers as the members deem necessary.

12 (2) The council shall employ a caseload forecast supervisor to
13 supervise the preparation of all caseload forecasts. As used in this
14 chapter, "supervisor" means the caseload forecast supervisor.

15 (3) Approval by an affirmative vote of at least five members of
16 the council is required for any decisions regarding employment of the
17 supervisor. Employment of the supervisor shall terminate after each
18 term of three years. At the end of the first year of each three-year
19 term the council shall consider extension of the supervisor's term by
20 one year. The council may fix the compensation of the supervisor. The
21 supervisor shall employ staff sufficient to accomplish the purposes
22 of this section.

23 (4) The caseload forecast council shall oversee the preparation
24 of and approve, by an affirmative vote of at least four members, the
25 official state caseload forecasts prepared under RCW 43.88C.020. If
26 the council is unable to approve a forecast before a date required in
27 RCW 43.88C.020, the supervisor shall submit the forecast without
28 approval and the forecast shall have the same effect as if approved
29 by the council.

30 (5) A councilmember who does not cast an affirmative vote for
31 approval of the official caseload forecast may request, and the
32 supervisor shall provide, an alternative forecast based on
33 assumptions specified by the member.

34 (6) Members of the caseload forecast council shall serve without
35 additional compensation but shall be reimbursed for travel expenses
36 in accordance with RCW 44.04.120 while attending sessions of the
37 council or on official business authorized by the council.
38 Nonlegislative members of the council shall be reimbursed for travel
39 expenses in accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

1 (7) "Caseload," as used in this chapter, means:

2 (a) The number of persons expected to meet entitlement
3 requirements and require the services of public assistance programs,
4 state correctional institutions, state correctional noninstitutional
5 supervision, state institutions for juvenile offenders, the common
6 school system, long-term care, medical assistance, foster care, and
7 adoption support;

8 (b) The number of students who are eligible for the Washington
9 college bound scholarship program and are expected to attend an
10 institution of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.92.030;

11 (c) The number of students who are eligible for the Washington
12 promise program and are expected to attend a community or technical
13 college as defined in section 2 of this act; and

14 (d) The number of children who are eligible, as defined in RCW
15 43.215.405, to participate in, and the number of children actually
16 served by, the early childhood education and assistance program.

17 (8) The caseload forecast council shall forecast the temporary
18 assistance for needy families and the working connections child care
19 programs as a courtesy.

20 (9) The caseload forecast council shall forecast youth
21 participating in the extended foster care program pursuant to RCW
22 74.13.031 separately from other children who are residing in foster
23 care and who are under eighteen years of age.

24 (10) Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the
25 definitions provided in RCW 43.88.020 apply to this chapter.

26 NEW SECTION. Sec. 11. Sections 1 through 9 and 12 of this act
27 constitute a new chapter in Title 28B RCW.

28 NEW SECTION. Sec. 12. This act is necessary for the immediate
29 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of
30 the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes
31 effect July 1, 2017.

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