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## College & Workforce Development Committee

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### HB 1659

**Brief Description:** Making higher education more affordable and accessible for students by bridging the gap between cost and need to reduce barriers, improve opportunity, and advance economic security.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Slatter, Sullivan, Leavitt, Ryu, Morgan, Berry, Ramel, Thai, Wicks, Sells, Johnson, J., Berg, Bateman, Valdez, Chopp, Walen, Fey, Goodman, Gregerson, Taylor, Macri, Simmons, Wylie, Kloba, Pollet, Ormsby, Harris-Talley, Hackney and Frame.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands the Washington College Grant (WCG) program by modifying the income eligibility thresholds and award levels.
- Entitles WCG students who are receiving the maximum WCG award to a bridge grant, which is an additional annual stipend for expenses beyond tuition and fees.

**Hearing Date:** 1/12/22

**Staff:** Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

#### Background:

The Washington College Grant (WCG) is the state's largest financial aid program and provides grants to low-income students to pursue postsecondary education. The WCG is an entitlement program with guaranteed grants for students who qualify. To qualify, a student must meet the following criteria:

- demonstrate financial need;

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- be a state resident;
- be enrolled at a Washington higher education institution or be enrolled in an approved, registered apprenticeship program;
- file a financial aid application; and
- not already have a bachelor's degree or higher.

The WCG award amounts vary based on the institution the student attends and the student's family income. Financial need is based on the state's median family income (MFI) and the student's family size. The WCG awards are prorated based on the student's family income level as follows:

<b>Median Family Income</b>	<b>Grant Award Amount</b>
0-55 percent of state MFI	Maximum Award
56-60 percent of state MFI	70 percent of maximum award
61-65 percent of state MFI	60 percent of maximum award
66-70 percent of state MFI	50 percent of maximum award
71-75 percent of state MFI	24.5 percent of maximum award
76-100 percent of state MFI	10 percent of maximum award

The maximum WCG award covers tuition and services and activities fees for 15 quarter credits or the equivalent at the state's public institutions. For example, the 2021-22 maximum award for students attending the University of Washington is \$11,339. For students attending private institutions, the maximum award amounts vary based on statutorily set amounts. For example, the maximum award for a student attending a private non-profit institution is \$9,739. A student is eligible to receive the WCG for five years or up to 125 percent of the published length of the student's program.

**Summary of Bill:**

Washington College Grant Expansion.

The WCG income eligibility thresholds and award amounts are expanded per the table below:

<b>Median Family Income</b>	<b>Award Amount</b>
0-70 percent of state MFI	Maximum Award
71-80 percent of state MFI	50 percent of maximum award
81-90 percent of state MFI	25 percent of maximum award
91-100 percent of state MFI	10 percent of maximum award

Bridge Grants.

Beginning with the 2022-23 academic year, the WCG recipients who are receiving a maximum WCG award are also entitled to receive a bridge grant. A bridge grant is an annual stipend provided in addition to the WCG to provide supplementary financial support to low-income students to cover higher education expenses beyond tuition and fees, such as books, lab fees, supplies, technology, transportation, housing, and child care. The bridge grant award amounts

are as follows:

- for WCG recipients who are also recipients of the College Bound Scholarship, the bridge grant is \$500 annually; or
- for WCG recipients who are not College Bound Scholarship recipients, the bridge grant is \$1,000 annually.

To receive the full bridge grant for which the student qualifies, the student must be enrolled on at least a half-time basis. Students who are enrolled less than half-time will receive a prorated bridge grant. Bridge grants are applied to a student's financial aid package after all other gift aid has been awarded.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 4, 2022.

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