

---

## College & Workforce Development Committee

---

### HB 1835

**Brief Description:** Creating outreach and completion initiatives to increase postsecondary enrollment.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Hansen, Leavitt, Santos, Simmons, Chopp, Slatter, Bergquist, Valdez, Pollet and Ormsby.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) to conduct a statewide marketing campaign to promote the Washington College Grant.
- Establishes a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) Outreach and Completion Initiative between public institutions of higher education and high schools.
- Establishes two grant programs, one through public libraries and one through community-based organizations, to conduct community outreach to increase FAFSA and WASFA completion rates.
- Makes changes to the Washington College Grant program to determine a student's financial need eligibility based on whether they are receiving benefits through a public assistance program.

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

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

---

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

## **Background:**

### Financial Aid Applications.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the federal form that current and prospective students fill out to determine their eligibility for federal and state financial aid for attending postsecondary education institutions. The FAFSA asks a variety of questions based on federal income tax returns to determine a student's financial need, taking into account the student's dependency status, income, assets, family size, and other factors. Students without legal immigrant status are ineligible for federal financial aid. The Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) is an alternative form for students who cannot file a FAFSA, but may still be eligible for state financial aid. The WASFA is administered by the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC).

### The Washington College Grant.

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 administered by the WSAC with guaranteed grants for students who qualify. To qualify, a student must:

- demonstrate financial need;
- 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:**

#### Statewide Marketing Campaign.

Subject to appropriation, the WSAC must conduct a statewide marketing campaign to increase awareness of the WCG program. The WSAC must issue a request for proposal to hire a marketing firm to produce high quality advertisements to promote the WCG program. Advertisements should be marketed towards potential postsecondary education students and their parents with the goal of increasing awareness of the WCG to further the state's educational attainment goals. Advertisements may include television commercials, billboards, advertisements on public transit, paid Internet search advertisements, and social media marketing. In addition, the WSAC must send letters to families who may be eligible for the WCG to inform them of their potential eligibility.

#### FAFSA and WASFA Outreach and Completion Initiative.

Subject to appropriation, the public institutions of higher education (institutions) must develop and administer a FAFSA and WASFA Outreach and Completion Initiative. The institutions must employ outreach specialists to work directly with high school students and their families for the purpose of increasing FAFSA and WASFA completion rates. It is the Legislature's intent that the outreach specialists be employed at a ratio of one outreach specialist to 600 high school students, with 60 percent of the outreach specialists employed by the community and technical colleges and 40 percent employed by the public four-year institutions. The outreach specialists must use FAFSA and WASFA data maintained by the WSAC to conduct targeted outreach and completion assistance. The outreach specialists must conduct outreach as appropriate, including virtual or in-person presentations with students and families, announcements on school intercoms and social media channels, outreach to recent high school graduates as peer messengers, and events at school college or career fairs. The institutions must report to the Legislature by December 1, 2023, on the FAFSA and WASFA Outreach and Completion Initiative. The report must include details on how the institutions used the funding and how the initiatives worked to increase FAFSA and WASFA completion rates. FAFSA and WASFA completion data and specific details about the number of students assisted must also be included.

#### Community FAFSA and WASFA Outreach Grants.

Subject to appropriation, the WSAC must select an organization or organizations with a proven track record of working with historically underrepresented populations to implement a community grant program to increase FAFSA and WASFA completion rates. The organization(s) must be embedded in their community, have a strong foundation of trust among members of the community, and be committed to working directly with individuals to assist with one-on-one FAFSA and WASFA completion. The organization(s) selected for the grant program must report back to the WSAC on their progress, complete with data on the number of individuals assisted and how the organization boosted FAFSA and WASFA completion rates. The WSAC must compile and report this information back to the Legislature by December 1, 2022.

### Library FAFSA and WASFA Outreach Grants.

Subject to appropriation, the State Library must administer a program to distribute grants to local, public libraries to conduct community outreach to increase FAFSA and WASFA completion rates. The public libraries are required to partner with community-based organizations that are embedded in their communities, have a strong foundation of trust among the community, and are committed to working directly with individuals to assist with one-on-one FAFSA and WASFA completion. The State Library must report to the Legislature by December 1, 2022, on the progress of the library outreach project to boost FAFSA and WASFA completion rates.

### Washington College Grant Changes.

The WCG is modified to allow a student to either demonstrate financial need by meeting the income requirements or by the WSAC confirming the student's participation in one of the following state public assistance programs: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; Aged, Blind, or Disabled Assistance Benefits; or Refugee Cash Assistance. The WSAC is required to enter into a data-sharing agreement with the Department of Social and Health Services to facilitate the sharing of individual-level data for the purpose of confirming eligibility through a public assistance program.

The WSAC must also issue certificates for students in grades 10, 11, and 12 whose families are receiving benefits through one of the public assistance programs. This certificate validates the student's financial need eligibility for the WCG for one year after high school graduation upon enrollment in a higher education institution, provided the student meets the other WCG eligibility requirements.

Public and private institutions of higher education participating in the WCG program must enter into data-sharing agreements with the WSAC to receive lists of individuals enrolled in the public assistance programs. The institutions must then use this information to conduct outreach directly to WCG eligible individuals.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 10, 2022.

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