
College & Workforce Development Committee

ESSB 5321

Brief Description: Expanding access to the college bound scholarship.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Nobles, Das, Dhingra, Frockt, Hasegawa, Liias, Lovelett, Nguyen, Randall, Saldaña, Stanford and Wilson, C.).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Eliminates the requirement that a student sign a pledge to be eligible for the College Bound Scholarship (CBS).
- Requires the Washington Student Achievement Council to automatically enroll eligible students in the CBS program and for students to acknowledge receipt of their enrollment.
- Vests a student's right in the CBS program upon enrollment, assuming the student meets the requirements of the program.

Hearing Date: 3/17/21

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

The College Bound Scholarship (CBS) program was established in 2007 to provide guaranteed four-year tuition to students from low-income families. The first CBS awards were granted to the graduating high school class of 2012. Eligible students for the CBS include those who:

- qualify for free or reduced-price lunches in the seventh grade, eighth grade, or in certain circumstances, ninth grade; or

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.

- are independent from parents or guardians, or are receiving extended foster care services; and
- are in grades 7 through 12; or
- are between the ages of 18 and 21 years and have not graduated from high school.

A student may also be eligible if they were a dependent who was adopted between the ages of 14 and 18 with a negotiated adoption agreement that includes continued eligibility in the CBS program.

Beginning in the seventh grade, eligible students are notified of their eligibility and the requirements for the scholarship. To be eligible for the CBS, a student must sign a pledge during the seventh or eighth grade that includes a commitment to graduate from high school with at least a C-average and no felony convictions.

To receive the CBS, the student must graduate having fulfilled the CBS pledge requirements. Upon graduation, the student's family income will be assessed and if it does not exceed 65 percent of the state median family income, the student will receive a scholarship. The CBS recipients that attend public two-year or four-year institutions of higher education receive an award to cover the cost of tuition and fees, minus any state-funded grant, scholarship, or waiver assistance. The CBS recipient also receives \$500 for books and materials. The student must maintain satisfactory academic progress and may not receive the scholarship for more than four full-time years.

Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill:

The requirement that a student sign a pledge in order to be eligible for the CBS is eliminated. The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) must automatically enroll all eligible students into the CBS program, with no action from the student, the student's family, or the student's guardians. The WSAC must notify an eligible student and their parents or guardians of the student's enrollment in the CBS program and the requirements for receiving a CBS award. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families must provide the WSAC with a list of eligible students when requested. The WSAC must develop effective methods to notify eligible students of their enrollment in the CBS program and the requirements to receive an award. To the maximum extent practicable, eligible students must acknowledge enrollment in the CBS program and receipt of the requirements to receive an award. The WSAC must also make available to every school district information, brochures, and posters to increase awareness and to enable school districts to notify eligible students directly or through school teachers, counselors, or school activities.

The legislature intends to create a statutory contractual right for CBS students. The right of an eligible student to receive a CBS award vests upon enrollment in the CBS program, assuming the student meets the CBS program requirements.

CBS students must enroll in a higher education institution no later than one academic year

following high school graduation. CBS students must use the four full-time years worth of scholarship awards within a five-year period.

The CBS program changes are retroactively applied to 7th grade students beginning with the 2019-20 school year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.