

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5288

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As of January 28, 2021

**Title:** An act relating to increasing access to the Washington opportunity scholarship program.

**Brief Description:** Increasing access to the Washington opportunity scholarship program.

**Sponsors:** Senators Liias, Short, Conway, Das, Frockt, Hunt, Lovelett, Nguyen, Nobles, Randall, Saldaña and Wilson, C..

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/28/21.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Removes the community college and advanced degree program award requirement that a student must have graduated from a Washington high school.
- Expands eligible categories of degrees and credentials to include industry recognized credentials.
- Modifies the residency requirements for the rural jobs program.

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**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**Staff:** Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

**Background:** Washington State Opportunity Scholarship Program. The Washington State Opportunity Scholarship (WSOS) program was established in 2011 to provide scholarships to low- and middle-income resident students pursuing eligible high-demand baccalaureate degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and health care, and to encourage scholarship recipients to work in the state upon completion of their degrees.

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*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.*

The program was expanded in 2018 to provide awards to students in high-demand community and technical college programs as well as advanced degree programs.

Rural County High Employer Demand Jobs Program. The Rural County High Employer Demand Jobs (rural jobs) Program was established in 2018 to meet the workforce needs of business and industry in rural counties, by assisting students in earning certificates, associate degrees, or other industry-recognized credentials necessary for employment in high employer demand fields. Funding for the program is a combination of private funds and state matching funds. State matching funds may not exceed \$1 million in a single fiscal biennium. Under the program, students are eligible to receive scholarship funds and support services, as determined by the WSOS Board, to help meet eligible expenses when the student enrolls in a public community and technical college (CTC) program that prepares students for a high employer demand field.

**Summary of Bill:** To be eligible for the career and technical scholarship or the advanced degree program under the WSOS, a student no longer must have graduated from a Washington high school.

The career and technical scholarship program is broadened to allow students enrolled in eligible industry recognized credential programs to receive the award. Industry recognized credentials are defined as non-credit programs offered by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges that provide a license or professional certification recognized by employers as necessary to employment.

The residency requirements under the rural jobs program are modified to include students who are either residents of an eligible county, or earned a high school diploma in a school district and enroll in a community college in an eligible county.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**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:** PRO: This bill is by request of the opportunity scholarship program and suggests some refinements to the statute. In 2018, we expanded the scope of the program to include rural jobs and advanced degrees. But, some of those qualified individuals may not have earned a high school degree in Washington. There is also a fix to address rural access and make sure that we are not closing access to eligible rural students. The bill before you today is intended to make technical changes to some 2018 legislation and to address several obstacles to student access we have learned through implementation. This bill would have expanded eligible programs to industry recognized

credentials but we request this language be removed while we work through what would be included in that definition.

OTHER: Skillspire is a coding bootcamp whose mission is to skill-up diverse communities for jobs in the tech sector. Many of our students need a short term program to transfer to a well-paying career. I would like to request vocational training programs, like Skillspire, be included in programs like WSOS.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Marko Liias, Prime Sponsor; Scott Copeland, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Kimber Connors, Washington State Opportunity Scholarship.

OTHER: Yasmin Ali, Skillspire LLC.

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