

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5321

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As of February 1, 2021

**Title:** An act relating to the college bound scholarship.

**Brief Description:** Expanding access to the college bound scholarship.

**Sponsors:** Senators Nobles, Das, Dhingra, Frockt, Hasegawa, Lias, Lovelett, Nguyen, Randall, Saldaña, Stanford and Wilson, C..

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/02/21.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Eliminates the requirement that a student sign a pledge to be eligible for the College Bound Scholarship.
- Directs the office of financial assistance to develop a process for auto-enrolling eligible students.
- Requires that all eligible students receive notification of their enrollment in the program and eligibility criteria.

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

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

**Background:** The College Bound Scholarship Program (CBS) 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;
- are in grades seven through twelve, and are dependent on parents or guardians, or are

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- receiving extended foster care services; or
- are between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one years of age and have not graduated from high school.

Beginning in the seventh-grade, eligible students are notified of their eligibility and the requirements for award of the scholarship. To be eligible to receive 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. The pledge must be witnessed by a parent or guardian and forwarded to the Office of Student Financial Assistance within the Washington Student Achievement Council. If the student is a dependent, the student is automatically enrolled without any necessary action by the student or the student's family.

To receive the CBS, the student must graduate with at least a C average from a public high school, approved private high school, or have received home-based instruction. The student cannot have a felony conviction and must be a resident student. Upon graduation, the student's family income will be assessed, and if it does not exceed 65 percent of the state median family income (MFI), the student will receive a scholarship.

CBS recipients that attend public two-year or four-year higher education institutions receive an award to cover the cost of tuition and fees, minus any state-funded grant, scholarship, or waiver assistance, plus \$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 Bill:** The bill as referred to committee not considered.

**Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute):** The requirement that a student sign a pledge in order to be eligible for the college bound scholarship is eliminated. The Legislature intends to create a statutory contractual right for students who fulfill the college bound scholarship requirements. A student has a vested right to the award of a college bound scholarship if they:

- qualify for free or reduced-price lunch in the seventh-, eighth-, or, under certain circumstances, ninth-grade;
- graduate high school with a minimum of a C average;
- have no felony convictions;
- are a resident student; and
- have a family income that does not exceed 65 percent of the median family income at the time of graduation.

The office of financial assistance must develop a process for auto-enrolling and notifying all eligible students of the scholarship and its requirements. The office must mail to all eligible students in grades seven through nine the notification of enrollment and the program requirements.

The requirements in this act are applied retroactively to students beginning with the 2019-20 school year.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 1, 2021.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

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