**1559-S2 AMS WM S2921.2 - NOT FOR FLOOR USE**

**2SHB 1559** - S COMM AMD

By Committee on Ways & Means

**ADOPTED 04/12/2023**

Strike everything after the enacting clause and insert the following:

"NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  In 2022, students at 39 colleges and universities across Washington state participated in a survey about basic needs insecurities, including access to food, housing, child care, and more. The survey found that nearly half of all students in all regions of the state experienced some type of basic needs insecurity. One in every three students experienced either food insecurity or housing insecurity. One in every 10 students had also experienced homelessness in the previous 12 months. Some students experienced these insecurities at higher rates than others, and former foster youth had the highest rates of basic needs insecurities with 75 percent experiencing either food or housing insecurity. Addressing basic needs challenges for students contributes to their ability to remain enrolled and pursue their educational goals as evidenced by data from the two student support programs the legislature previously enacted, the student emergency assistance grant program and the supporting students experiencing homelessness pilot program. When students received this assistance, an average of 88 percent of them were able to persist in their programs.

Therefore, the legislature intends to continue to support students and help students meet their basic needs by increasing access to resources and support services.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28B.10 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, each institution of higher education, the university campuses created under chapter 28B.45 RCW, and the tribal college must have a minimum of one part-time benefits navigator to assist students in accessing public benefits and existing emergency assistance programs such as those funded by RCW 28B.50.295. The institutions of higher education and the tribal college, in coordination with the respective benefits navigators, may:

(a) Identify campus food pantry policies that, in practice, create barriers to access and reduce or remove those barriers in the implementation of this subsection;

(b) Review and update methods to identify likely low-income and food-insecure students and conduct communications and outreach methods by the institution to promote opportunities for benefits assistance (such as basic food enrollment, working connections child care enrollment, referrals to the special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children, affordable housing assistance) and emergency financial resources;

(c) Identify opportunities for the institution and partnerships with community-based organizations to holistically support students' basic needs, access to benefits and community resources; and

(d) Facilitate discussions and generate recommendations amongst community stakeholders on the basic needs of the institution's geographic postsecondary student population.

(2) Public four-year institutions of higher education and their respective university campuses shall coordinate with an organization representing the presidents of the public four-year institutions to submit a report that must include outcomes from implementation of benefits navigators, and provide recommendations regarding strategies to address student basic needs. The community and technical colleges shall coordinate with the state board for community and technical colleges to submit a report that must include outcomes from implementation of benefits navigators, and provide recommendations regarding strategies to address student basic needs. The organizations representing the presidents of the public four-year institutions and the state board for community and technical colleges must submit the reports by December 1, 2025, and every other year thereafter, to the appropriate committees of the legislature in accordance with RCW 43.01.036.

(3) The tribal college shall submit a report that must include the findings and activities from implementation of the benefits navigator and provide recommendations regarding strategies to address student basic needs. The tribal college must submit the report by December 1, 2025, and every other year thereafter, to the appropriate committees of the legislature in accordance with RCW 43.01.036.

(4) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(a) "Benefits navigator" means an individual who is employed by an institution of higher education for the purpose of helping students seek, apply for, and receive assistance from benefits programs, emergency resources, and community resources.

(b) "Institutions of higher education" has the same meaning as in RCW 28B.10.016.

(c) "Student basic needs" means food, water, shelter, clothing, physical health, mental health, child care, or similar needs that students enrolled at an institution of higher education or tribal college may face difficulty with and that hinders their ability to begin or continue their enrollment.

(d) "Tribal colleges" means institutions of higher education operated by an Indian tribe as defined in RCW 43.376.010.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, a pilot program to provide free and low-cost meal plans or food vouchers to eligible low-income students is established at:

(a) Four college districts, two on each side of the crest of the Cascade mountains, selected by the state board for community and technical colleges; and

(b) Two public four-year institutions of higher education, one on each side of the crest of the Cascade mountains, selected by an organization representing the presidents of public four-year institutions.

(2) The pilot program expires July 1, 2026.

(3) This section expires January 1, 2027.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  If specific funding for the purposes of this act, referencing this act by bill or chapter number, is not provided by June 30, 2023, in the omnibus appropriations act, this act is null and void."

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On page 1, line 2 of the title, after "act;" strike the remainder of the title and insert "adding a new section to chapter 28B.10 RCW; creating new sections; and providing an expiration date."

EFFECT: (1) Eliminates the establishment of basic needs task forces at the public four year institutions, university campuses, and state board; and, no longer requires the development of basic needs strategic plans.

(2) Specifies that each benefits navigator must be at least part-time and makes the hiring of benefit navigators subject to appropriations.

(3) Eliminates the requirement that benefit navigators be full time.

(4) Specifies activities that the institutions of higher education and the tribal college, in coordination with benefits navigators may engage in.

(5) Requires the public four year institutions and the university campuses to collaborate on a report to the legislature regarding outcome from the implementation of benefit navigators. Requires the college board to submit a report to the legislature on the outcomes from benefits navigators on behalf of the CTCs.

(6) Eliminates the requirement that benefits hubs be established.

(7) Eliminates the basic needs survey requirement.