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**SENATE BILL 6300**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2024 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Randall, Nobles, Kuderer, Lovelett, Shewmake, Stanford, and Valdez; by request of Student Achievement Council

AN ACT Relating to permitting beneficiaries of public assistance programs to automatically qualify as income-eligible for the purpose of receiving the Washington college grant; and amending RCW 28B.92.200 and 28B.92.225.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

**Sec.**  RCW 28B.92.200 and 2022 c 214 s 5 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The Washington college grant program is created to provide a statewide free college program for eligible participants and greater access to postsecondary education for Washington residents. The Washington college grant program is intended to increase the number of high school graduates and adults that can attain a postsecondary credential and provide them with the qualifications needed to compete for job opportunities in Washington.

(2) The office shall implement and administer the Washington college grant program and is authorized to establish rules necessary for implementation of the program.

(3) The legislature shall appropriate funding for the Washington college grant program. Allocations must be made on the basis of estimated eligible participants enrolled in eligible institutions of higher education or apprenticeship programs. All eligible students are entitled to a Washington college grant beginning in academic year 2020-21.

(4) The office shall award Washington college grants to all eligible students beginning in academic year 2020-21.

(5) To be eligible for the Washington college grant, students must meet the following requirements:

(a)(i) Demonstrate financial need under RCW 28B.92.205;

(ii) Receive one or more of the following types of public assistance:

(A) Aged, blind, or disabled assistance benefits under chapter 74.62 RCW;

(B) Essential needs and housing support program benefits under RCW 43.185C.220; ((~~or~~))

(C) Pregnant women assistance program financial grants under RCW 74.62.030;

(D) Washington basic food program benefits under chapter 74.04 RCW; or

(E) Washington food assistance program benefits under RCW 74.08A.120; or

(iii) Be a Washington high school student in the 10th, 11th, or 12th grade whose parent or legal guardian is receiving one or more of the types of public assistance listed in (a)(ii) of this subsection and have received a certificate confirming eligibility from the office in accordance with RCW 28B.92.225;

(b)(i) Be enrolled or accepted for enrollment for at least three quarter credits or the equivalent semester credits at an institution of higher education in Washington as defined in RCW 28B.92.030; or

(ii) Be enrolled in a registered apprenticeship program approved under chapter 49.04 RCW;

(c) Be a resident student as defined in RCW 28B.15.012(2) (a) through (e);

(d) File an annual application for financial aid as approved by the office; and

(e) Must not have earned a baccalaureate degree or higher from a postsecondary institution.

(6) Washington college grant eligibility may not extend beyond five years or one hundred twenty-five percent of the published length of the program in which the student is enrolled or the credit or clock-hour equivalent.

(7) Institutional aid administrators shall determine whether a student eligible for the Washington college grant in a given academic year may remain eligible for the ensuing year if the student's family income increases by no more than three percent.

(8) Qualifications for receipt and renewal include maintaining satisfactory academic progress toward completion of an eligible program as determined by the office and established in rule.

(9) Should a recipient terminate his or her enrollment for any reason during the academic year, the unused portion of the grant shall be returned to the state educational grant fund by the institution of higher education according to the institution of higher education's policy for issuing refunds, except as provided in RCW 28B.92.070.

(10) An eligible student enrolled on a part-time basis shall receive a prorated portion of the Washington college grant for any academic period in which he or she is enrolled on a part-time basis.

(11) The Washington college grant is intended to be used to meet the costs of postsecondary education for students with financial need. The student shall be awarded all need-based financial aid for which the student qualifies as determined by the institution.

(12) Students and participating institutions of higher education shall comply with all the rules adopted by the council for the administration of this chapter.

**Sec.**  RCW 28B.92.225 and 2022 c 214 s 6 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The office shall enter into a data-sharing agreement with the department of social and health services to facilitate the sharing of individual-level data. ((~~The~~)) To the extent allowable under state and federal law, the department of social and health services shall send the office a list of all individuals receiving benefits under the public assistance programs listed under RCW 28B.92.200(5) on at least an annual basis. The office shall use the list to confirm students' eligibility for the Washington college grant program, without requiring the student to fill out a separate financial aid form. The office may also use the information to conduct outreach promoting the Washington college grant.

(2) For high school students in 10th, 11th, and 12th grades whose families are receiving benefits under one or more of the public assistance programs listed under RCW 28B.92.200(5), the office shall issue a certificate to the student that validates the student's financial need eligibility for the Washington college grant program. The certificate is good for one year after high school graduation and may be used upon enrollment in an eligible institution of higher education, provided the student meets the other Washington college grant eligibility requirements. The office shall track and maintain records of students who were issued certificates under this section in order to confirm a student's financial need eligibility with an institution of higher education. A student does not need to produce the certificate to receive the Washington college grant.

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