

FINAL BILL REPORT

2SHB 2214

C 116 L 24

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Permitting beneficiaries of public assistance programs to automatically qualify as income-eligible for the purpose of receiving the Washington college grant.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Slatter, Bergquist, Chopp, Ramel, Reeves, Paul, Morgan, Gregerson, Ormsby, Alvarado, Reed, Fosse, Macri, Goodman, Pollet, Leavitt, Timmons, Davis, Riccelli and Duerr; by request of Student Achievement Council).

House Committee on Postsecondary Education & Workforce
House Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

Washington College Grant.

The Washington College Grant (WCG) is the state's largest financial aid program and provides grants to low-income students to pursue postsecondary education. The WCG is an entitlement program administered by the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) with guaranteed grants for students who qualify. To qualify, a student must:

- demonstrate financial need;
- be a state resident;
- be enrolled at a Washington higher education institution or be enrolled in an approved, registered apprenticeship program;
- file a financial aid application; and
- not already have a bachelor's degree or higher.

Students may demonstrate financial need by meeting income requirements or by the WSAC confirming the student's participation in one of the following state public assistance programs: Aged, Blind, or Disabled Assistance Benefits; Essential Needs and Housing Support; or Pregnant Women Assistance. A student in grade 10, 11, or 12 can demonstrate

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financial need if the student's parent or legal guardian receives benefits under one of these public assistance programs and the student receives a certificate from the WSAC validating the student's WCG financial need eligibility. This certificate validates the student's WCG financial need eligibility for one year after high school graduation upon enrollment in a higher education institution, provided the student meets the other WCG eligibility requirements.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) releases an annual list of individuals participating in the public assistance programs listed above so the WSAC can confirm student eligibility for the WCG.

The WCG award amounts vary based on the institution the student attends and the student's financial need. Financial need is based on the state's median family income (MFI) and the student's family size. The WCG awards are prorated based on the student's family income level as follows:

Median Family Income	Grant Award Amount
0-55 percent of state MFI	Maximum Award
56-60 percent of state MFI	70 percent
61-65 percent of state MFI	60 percent
66-70 percent of state MFI	50 percent
71-75 percent of state MFI	24.5 percent
76-100 percent of state MFI	10 percent

The 2023-25 Omnibus Appropriations Act granted the maximum award amount for 65 percent state MFI or below. The maximum WCG award covers tuition, and services and activities fees, for 15 quarter credits or the equivalent at the state's public institutions. A student is eligible to receive the WCG for five years or up to 125 percent of the published length of the student's program.

Federal and State Basic Food Programs.

Washington's Basic Food Program (Basic Food) is administered by the DSHS and provides food assistance to eligible low-income individuals and families. Basic Food includes both the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the state-funded Food Assistance Program (FAP). The FAP is for individuals who are legal immigrants and meet all eligibility requirements for SNAP except for citizenship and immigration status. Generally, an individual must be at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level to be eligible for benefits. Congress authorizes funding and establishes SNAP requirements.

Financial Aid Applications.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a federal financial aid application used to determine a student's eligibility for federal financial aid. The Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) is used by students who do not fill out a FAFSA, which includes undocumented students or those who do not qualify due to immigration status. The WASFA is used to qualify such students for state financial aid.

Summary:

Beginning in the 2025-26 academic year, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students who receive Basic Food or FAP benefits automatically qualify as income-eligible for the WCG. The WSAC must certify income eligibility for these students. Students whose income eligibility for the WCG has been established by their participation in Basic Food or the FAP must receive an annual notice about the importance of submitting a FAFSA or WASFA and a notice that they may establish eligibility for additional state and federal aid by submitting a FAFSA or WASFA.

The annual list of individuals participating in the public assistance programs shared by the DSHS with the WSAC may only be shared to the extent allowable under state and federal law. The WSAC must submit a report to the Legislature by December 1, 2026, and each year thereafter, detailing WCG participation by students whose income eligibility for the WCG has been established by their participation in Basic Food or the FAP.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	68	29
Senate	28	20

Effective: June 6, 2024