

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## 2SHB 1559

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As Passed Senate - Amended, April 12, 2023

**Title:** An act relating to the student basic needs at public postsecondary institutions act.

**Brief Description:** Establishing the student basic needs at public postsecondary institutions act.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Entenman, Fitzgibbon, Stonier, Paul, Riccelli, Bergquist, Pollet and Leavitt).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/3/23, 57-40.

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education & Workforce Development: 3/15/23 [DP-WM, w/oRec].

Ways & Means: 3/21/23, 4/04/23 [DPA, DNP, w/oRec].

**Floor Activity:** Passed Senate - Amended: 4/12/23, 29-20.

### Brief Summary of Bill (As Amended by Senate)

- Establishes benefits navigators at each institution of higher education, university campus, and the tribal college.
- Creates the Free and Reduced-Price Meals Pilot Program.

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.  
Signed by Senators Randall, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair; Liias.

**Minority Report:** That it be referred without recommendation.  
Signed by Senators Holy, Ranking Member; Hawkins.

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

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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.*

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Rolfes, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair, Operating & Revenue; Mullet, Vice Chair, Capital; Billig, Conway, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Hunt, Keiser, Nguyen, Saldaña, Van De Wege and Wellman.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Wilson, L., Ranking Member, Operating; Gildon, Assistant Ranking Member, Operating; Schoesler, Ranking Member, Capital; Rivers, Assistant Ranking Member, Capital; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Member, Capital; Boehnke, Braun, Muzzall and Wagoner.

**Minority Report:** That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Pedersen and Torres.

**Staff:** Michele Alishahi (786-7433)

**Background:** The United Way of King County (UWKC) has identified that postsecondary students face food insecurity, housing insecurity, and other basic needs insecurities. In response to these needs, UWKC launched the bridge to finish campaign creating campus-based benefits hubs across ten participating institutions. The access hubs provide a single coordinated access point for basic needs support services. Services include access to food, monetary support, and coaching.

In 2021, the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) released a report showing that 41 percent of community college students in Washington faced food insecurity in 2019.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** Benefits Navigators. Subject to appropriations, each institution of higher education, the university campuses, and the tribal college must hire a minimum of one part-time benefits navigator. Each institution of higher education, university campus, and tribal college, in coordination with the benefit navigator, may:

- identify campus food pantry policies that create barriers to access and reduce or remove those barriers;
- review and update methods to identify students who may benefit from public benefits and connect them with available services;
- identify opportunities to partner with community-based organizations to support student basic needs; and
- facilities discussions and generate recommendations amongst community stakeholders on the basic needs of students.

Public four-year institutions of higher education and their respective university campuses must coordinate with an organization representing the presidents of the public four-year institutions to submit a report on outcomes from implementation of the benefits navigators

as well as additional recommendations to support student basic needs. This same reporting requirement applies to the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges on behalf of the community and technical colleges and separately to the tribal college. Reports are due to the Legislature by December 1, 2025 and every other year thereafter.

Pilot Program to Provide Free and Reduced-price Meals. Subject to appropriations, a pilot program to provide free and low-cost meal plans or vouchers is created. Four college districts, two on each side of the cascade crest and selected by the state board; and two public four-year institutions of higher education, one on each side of the cascade crest chosen by an organization representing the presidents of the public four-year institutions of higher education may participate in the pilot program. The pilot program expires July 1, 2026.

**Appropriation:** The bill contains a null and void clause requiring specific funding be provided in an omnibus appropriation act.

**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 on Second Substitute House Bill (Higher Education & Workforce Development):** No public hearing was held.

**Persons Testifying (Higher Education & Workforce Development):** N/A

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Higher Education & Workforce Development):** N/A

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Second Substitute House Bill (Ways & Means):** *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.*

PRO: This is a bill who's time has come. Students have been struggling to pay non-tuition costs for a long time. The effect of student struggling with basic needs is they struggle to get into school, succeed once there, and ultimately get a job. We urge you to pass this student success and workforce bill. This is an investment in creating more opportunities for students and providing necessary resources to help them complete. Poverty is the most significant factor in student retention and completion. Students don't just struggle with their courses, they also struggle with finding ways to access the resources they need. However you look at the data, student basic needs is a problem. Students who have access to benefits navigators are 25 percent more likely to complete. Tuition is a mere fraction of the cost of attendance. The problem is not always a lack of resources, but instead a lack of accessible resources. Needs hubs would build on existing good work to get students the resources they need so that they have more bandwidth for the important work they are doing. I've seen friends and

classmates leave school because they can't afford to eat. This bill will make it easier for students to focus on their studies so they don't have to worry about where their next meal or place to sleep will come from.

**Persons Testifying (Ways & Means):** PRO: Bryce McKibben, The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice; Jackson Feaster; Jennifer Dellinger, State Board for Community & Technical Colleges; Mariela Barriga, Highline College; Adán Mendoza, Washington Student Association; Bryson Walb; Jacqui Cain.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means):** No one.