

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5566

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As of February 8, 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:** Senators Shewmake, Randall, Wellman, Saldaña, Lias, Hasegawa, Hunt, Nguyen, Nobles, Trudeau, Valdez and Wilson, C..

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/10/23.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Creates student basic needs task forces and a Student Basic Needs Work Group.
- Establishes the Benefits Navigator Grant Program to fund implementation of the task force recommendations.
- Creates the Free and Reduced-Price Meals Pilot Program.

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

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

**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.

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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.*

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 Bill:** Student Basic Needs Task Forces. Institutions of higher education, university campuses, and tribal institutions of higher education (institutions) must each establish a Student Basic Needs Task Force (Task Force) to develop a Hunger-Free Campus Strategic Plan (plan). The Task Force must:

- annually survey students about access to basic needs;
- design a benefits hub to assist students in accessing public benefits, emergency financial resources, and other resources using a full-time navigator;
- ensure access to a campus food pantry;
- establish methods to identify likely low-income and food insecure students and provide outreach about available services; and
- identify opportunities for community partnerships.

Institutions must annually report on the findings and activities from the basic needs task forces to the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) and WSAC.

Postsecondary Basic Needs Work Group. Subject to appropriations, SBCTC and WSAC must convene a Postsecondary Basic Needs Workgroup (workgroup). The workgroup must:

- develop budgetary and administrative policy to administer the workgroup;
- coordinate administration and collection of the basic needs survey;
- identify how many benefits navigators are necessary to meet student needs;
- assess the distribution and effectiveness of state funds in support of student basic needs;
- issue recommendations regarding strategies to address student basic needs; and
- support a partnership with a not-for-profit with expertise in student basic needs.

Benefits Navigator Grant Program. Subject to appropriations, SBCTC and WSAC must design and implement a Basic Needs Grant Program to provide funding for implementation of the student basic needs task forces. The grant program must maximize use of the Basic Food Education and Training Program to fund navigators and maximize the use of federal funds.

Pilot Program to Provide Free and Reduced-price Meals. Chosen by WSAC and SBCTC, four community and technical colleges, and two public four-year institutions of higher education must participate in a pilot program to provide free and low-cost meal plans or food vouchers to eligible low-income students.

**Appropriation:** The bill contains a section or sections to limit implementation to the availability of amounts appropriated for that specific purpose.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 7, 2023.

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

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.