

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5712

As of February 15, 2023

Title: An act relating to expanding the Washington college grant and establishing the Washington college promise program.

Brief Description: Expanding the Washington college grant and establishing the Washington college promise program.

Sponsors: Senators Liias, Saldaña, Hasegawa, Lovelett, Nguyen, Valdez and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/17/23.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Increases Washington College Grant eligibility up to 150 percent of median family income.
- Makes permanent the Bridge Grant Program under the Washington College Grant.
- Establishes the Washington College Promise Program.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

Background: Washington College Grant. The State Need Grant was modified in 2019, and renamed the Washington College Grant (WCG). The WCG is the state's largest financial aid program, and provides awards to low-income students to pursue postsecondary education. The WCG is an entitlement program with guaranteed awards for those students who qualify. The WCG award amount varies based on the institution the student attends and the student's family income. For example, for students attending the state's public

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institutions, the maximum award is tuition and services and activities fees for 15 quarter credit hours or the equivalent. For students attending private, four-year, not-for-profit higher education institutions, in 2019-20 the maximum award was \$9,739. An eligible student may receive a WCG for five years or up to 125 percent of the published length of the student's program. Part-time students receive prorated awards.

Bridge Grant. In the 2022 supplemental operating budget state funding was provided for a Bridge Grant of \$500 for WCG recipients receiving the maximum award. A student is eligible for the Bridge Grant if the student receives the maximum WCG award and does not receive the College Bound Scholarship. The Grant is an annual stipend awarded in addition to the WCG to provide supplementary financial support to low-income students to cover higher education expenses beyond tuition and fees, such as books, lab fees, supplies, technology, transportation, housing, and childcare.

Summary of Bill: Washington College Grant. Beginning with academic year 2023-24, the following WCG income eligibility thresholds and award amounts apply:

Median Family Income (MFI)	Award Amount
0-75 percent of state MFI	maximum award
76-80 percent of state MFI	50 percent of maximum award
81-90 percent of state MFI	25 percent of maximum award
91-100 percent of state MFI	10 percent of maximum award

Beginning with academic year 2024-25, the following WCG income eligibility thresholds and award amounts apply:

Median Family Income (MFI)	Award Amount
0-100 percent of state MFI	maximum award
101-125 percent of state MFI	50 percent of maximum award
126-150 percent of state MFI	25 percent of maximum award

Bridge Grants. Bridge grants are annual stipends provided in addition to the WCG to provide supplementary financial support to low-income students to cover higher education expenses beyond tuition and fees.

Beginning with the 2022-23 academic year, WCG recipients who are receiving a maximum WCG award are also entitled to receive a bridge grant.

The bridge grant award amounts are as follows:

- for WCG recipients who are also recipients of the College Bound Scholarship, the bridge grant is \$500 annually; or
- for WCG recipients who are not College Bound Scholarship recipients, the bridge grant is \$1,000 annually.

Washington College Promise Program. The Washington College Promise Program (promise program) is established for the 2025-26 academic year. The award shall buy up to the cost of tuition and fees, plus a cost of attendance stipend, minus all other gift aid. In addition, students may receive up to \$1,500 for books and related expenses.

To be eligible, a student must:

- be enrolled or accepted for enrollment for at least three quarter credits or the semester equivalent at a community or technical college;
- be a resident student;
- file an annual Free Application for Federal Student Aid of the Washington Application for State Financial Aid application; and
- not have earned an associate degree or higher from a postsecondary institution.

Once a student has earned 45 credits, the student must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 to remain eligible for the promise program. A student is eligible for the award for up to 120 credits or four calendar years. Eligible academic programs include associates degrees, transfer degrees, professional and technical programs, and apprenticeship programs.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges must report on the outcomes of the promise program.

If a county or municipal organization establishes or has established a college promise program that provides tuition or related assistance to students in the community and technical colleges, the funds provided under the promise program may be used to replace or supplement the local funds, in accordance with rules established by the Washington Student Achievement Council.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.