

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1136

As Reported by House Committee On:
Postsecondary Education & Workforce

Title: An act relating to student navigational supports to increase postsecondary enrollment.

Brief Description: Providing student navigational supports to increase postsecondary enrollment.

Sponsors: Representatives Leavitt, Shavers, Callan, Bronoske, Simmons, Pollet, Nance and Bernbaum.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Postsecondary Education & Workforce: 1/17/25, 1/28/25 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Repeals the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) Outreach and Completion Initiative Pilot Program and establishes the Financial Aid Completion and Postsecondary Enrollment Program (Program).
- Requires the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to report annually to the Legislature on the Program.
- Requires the Education Data Center, in collaboration with other entities, to create a report on the completion rates of the FAFSA and WASFA by Washington high school seniors.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Paul, Chair; Nance, Vice Chair; Ybarra, Ranking Minority Member; McEntire, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Entenman, Keaton,

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.

Leavitt, Pollet, Reed, Salahuddin, Thomas and Timmons.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Graham, Ley, Mendoza, Rude and Schmidt.

Staff: Elizabeth Allison (786-7129).

Background:

Financial Aid Applications.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the federal form that current and prospective students fill out to determine their eligibility for federal and state financial aid for attending postsecondary education institutions. The Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) is an alternative form for students who cannot file a FAFSA, but may still be eligible for state financial aid. The WASFA is administered by the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC).

Educational Service Districts.

Educational Service Districts (ESDs) were established at the state level in 1969 with the purpose of serving as a vehicle to link local public and private schools with state and national educational resources. There are nine ESDs in Washington.

College Bound Scholarship.

The College Bound Scholarship (CBS) Program provides guaranteed four-year tuition to students from low-income families. Eligible students for the CBS include those who, among other requirements:

- qualify for free or reduced-price lunches in the seventh grade, eighth grade, or in certain circumstances, ninth grade; or
- are independent from parents or guardians, or are receiving extended foster care services, and meet other specified requirements.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid and Washington Application for State Financial Aid Outreach and Completion Initiative Pilot Program.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) is required to administer a FAFSA and WASFA Outreach and Completion Initiative Pilot Program. The SBCTC must select community or technical colleges to participate in the pilot program. The colleges selected must each be located within ESDs that are in the bottom two for FAFSA completion rates when combining their respective school districts' FAFSA completion rates over the past three academic years prior to June 9, 2022. The colleges selected to participate must employ outreach specialists to work directly with high school students and their families for the purpose of increasing FAFSA and WASFA completion rates.

The stated intent of the Legislature is that the outreach specialists be employed at a ratio of 1 outreach specialist to 600 high school seniors within the corresponding ESD. The

outreach specialists must use FAFSA and WASFA data maintained by the WSAC to conduct targeted outreach and completion assistance. The outreach specialists must also provide information on how to access private scholarships. The outreach specialists must conduct outreach as appropriate, including virtual or in-person presentations with students and families, announcements on school intercoms and social media channels, outreach to recent high school graduates as peer messengers, and events at school college or career fairs.

The SBCTC must report annually to the Legislature beginning December 1, 2023, on the FAFSA and WASFA Outreach and Completion Initiative Pilot Program. The report must include details on how colleges used the funding and how the initiatives worked to increase FAFSA and WASFA completion rates, including FAFSA and WASFA completion data and specific details about the number of students assisted.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) Outreach and Completion Initiative Pilot Program is repealed and a new program is established. Subject to appropriation, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) must administer a Financial Aid Completion and Postsecondary Enrollment Program (Enrollment Program).

Depending on the needs of the Educational Service District (ESD), the SBCTC must select at least one of the following entities to participate in the program: community and technical colleges (CTCs), public four-year institutions of higher education, tribal organizations, or community-based organizations. The SBCTC must establish a selection committee for selecting the entities to participate in the Enrollment Program. The selection committee must include at least two CTC representatives and two public four-year representatives, and may consult with CTCs, institutions of higher education, and the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC).

The entities selected to participate must each be located within ESDs that are in the bottom five for FAFSA completion rates when combining their respective school districts' FAFSA completion rates over the past three completed academic years. Selected entities must employ outreach and enrollment specialists (specialists) to work directly with the high schools in the corresponding ESD. The specialists must coordinate with the secondary school counseling program and other school district staff as appropriate to make significant contact with high school students and their families. The outreach must have a focus on secondary schools with a higher percentage of students who are eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch compared to other schools in the same ESD with the purpose of increasing FAFSA and WASFA completion rates. The specialists must use FAFSA, WASFA, and College Bound Scholarship eligibility data maintained by the WSAC to conduct targeted outreach and financial aid application assistance to high school seniors,

and must provide information on how to access private scholarships. Specialists must also conduct other outreach as appropriate, including virtual or in-person presentations with students and families, announcements on school intercoms and social media channels, outreach to recent high school graduates as peer messengers, and events at school college or career fairs.

Beginning January 15, 2026, the SBCTC must report annually to the Legislature on the Enrollment Program. The report must include details on how the CTCs, institutions of higher education, tribal organizations, or community-based organizations selected to use the funding and the initiatives worked to increase FAFSA and WASFA completion rates.

The Education Data Center, in collaboration with the SBCTC, the public four-year institutions of higher education, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the WSAC, must create a report on the completion rates of the FAFSA and WASFA by Washington high school seniors. The report must also include other specified disaggregated data.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill requires two new additional outreach and enrollment specialists (specialist) rather than an additional specialist in every education service district. Specialists must assist high school students in connecting with staff or instructors affiliated with state-registered apprenticeship programs to help students navigate apprenticeship application processes and utilizing eligible financial aid. Statewide organizations representing state-registered apprenticeship programs must collaborate to prepare training for specialists. The requirement that the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) administer a financial aid training program for secondary school teachers and other staff is removed. The requirement that the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the WSAC, and the Washington Professional Educator Standards Board offer continuing education credits to in-service educators and provide additional incentives for participation in this program is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available. New fiscal note requested on January 28, 2025.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The cost of tuition is of the main reasons why students do not pursue

postsecondary education. This bill addresses that to help get funds into student pockets. Students need help navigating the process to postsecondary education. Postsecondary education is critical to Washington's economy. There are workforce shortages in many industries. Businesses are great partners and are clamoring for workers. Washington invests in scholarships, but postsecondary enrollment is not increasing the same way. Students leave high school without knowing what postsecondary options they have. House Bill 1935 established the outreach pilot program in 2022. This bill expands the pilot program and makes it permanent. The navigators in the bill are not replacements for school counselors. The pilot program showed an increase in financial aid applications and student outreach. Financial aid has the potential to be life-changing, but application forms can be complicated.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) An amendment is needed if the intent is to include apprenticeships. The ratio of students to school counselors is not good.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Mari Leavitt, prime sponsor; Ben Mitchell, Foundation for Tacoma Students; Bill Lyne, United Faculty of Washington State/WEA; Colleen Hall, Columbia Basin College; Steve DuPont, Central Washington University; Sam Herriot, WA State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Jayme Shoun, Washington STEM; Myle Tang, Stand for Children Washington; Mykhail Lembke; Collin Bannister, ASWSU; and Sienna Jarrard, Associated Students of the University of Washington Bothell.

(Other) Minna Long, Washington State Building & Construction Trades Council; and Jenny Morgan, Washington School Counselor Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.