

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2458

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Postsecondary Education & Workforce

**Title:** An act relating to expanding access to the Washington college grant to students enrolled in eligible postsecondary nondegree credential programs.

**Brief Description:** Expanding access to the Washington college grant to students enrolled in eligible postsecondary nondegree credential programs.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Entenman, Reeves, Ryu, Zahn, Parshley, Thai, Doglio, Pollet and Hill; by request of State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Postsecondary Education & Workforce: 1/28/26, 2/3/26 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Expands Washington College Grant program eligibility to certain postsecondary nondegree credential programs.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Paul, Chair; Nance, Vice Chair; Entenman, Keaton, Mendoza, Pollet, Reed, Salahuddin, Schmidt, Thomas and Timmons.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Ybarra, Ranking Minority Member; McEntire, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Graham, Leavitt, Ley and Rude.

**Staff:** Saranda Ross (786-7068).

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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.*

## **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 institution of higher education or be enrolled in an approved, registered apprenticeship program;
- file a financial aid application; and
- not already have a bachelor's degree or higher.

An eligible student may receive the WCG for six years or up to 150 percent of the published length of the student's program. Part-time students receive prorated awards.

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (College Board) is a nine-member, Governor-appointed board that has general supervision and control over Washington's system of 34 public community and technical colleges. Among other duties, the College Board is charged with:

- preparing a budget for the system of community and technical colleges;
- ensuring that each of the state's 30 college districts offers comprehensive educational, training, and service programs to meet the needs of communities and students; and
- preparing a comprehensive master plan for the development of community and technical college education and training.

Nondegree Credential Programs. Nondegree credential programs may include programs such as Commercial Driver's License programs, welding certificates, carpentry certificates, residential construction certificates, and other short-term certificates, industry credentials, apprenticeships, and workforce-ready training programs, some of which are stackable for the purpose of pursuing additional qualifications or degrees.

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## **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

Beginning in the 2027-28 academic year, Washington College Grant eligibility is expanded to eligible students enrolled in eligible postsecondary nondegree credential programs, as determined by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) in consultation with the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) and established in rule. The WSAC must collaborate with the SBCTC to propose to the Legislature, by December 1, 2026, a maximum Washington College Grant award amount for students attending approved postsecondary nondegree credential programs.

## **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill adds a requirement that the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) must collaborate with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to propose to the Legislature, by December 1, 2026, a maximum Washington College Grant award amount for students attending approved postsecondary nondegree credential programs.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available. New fiscal note requested on February 4, 2026.

**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) Regardless of whether a student pursues higher education through a certificate program or degree program, it is still education and important to our society, particularly in regard to the state's goal of increasing higher education completion rates. This bill supports that goal by extending the Washington College Grant (WCG) to certain nondegree programs such as Commercial Driver's Licenses, welding and carpentry certificates, and other short certificates that can be awarded with or without college credit. Further, many of these certificates are stackable. These programs are delivered by community and technical colleges, industry partners, labor management centers, employers, and community providers. In these types of fields, value comes from employer hiring decisions, proven competency, and rapid adaptation to technology and safety standards, not rigid academic timelines.

This bill will increase access to workforce-aligned training, and support the state's workforce and credential goals. For every technical program at a community and technical college, there is a corresponding technical advisory board made up of industry members that work to improve the industry.

There is a massive workforce shortage for residential construction workers that is expected to worsen over the next 10 years. This bill would extend the Washington College Grant to, for example, eligible students in a 10-week residential construction program in which all students enrolled in the program have been hired prior to graduating.

This bill helps to meet critical workforce demands by connecting financial aid to real jobs. Over the last 20 years, for every 12 people who left the construction industry, only five people entered. Without financial aid, students must delay, borrow, or walk away from opportunities in their own communities.

This bill connects financial aid to real jobs, speeds up workforce readiness, and grows Washington's economy.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Debra Entenman, prime sponsor; Arlen Harris, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Dr. Timothy Stokes, President, South Puget Sound Community College; Daimon Doyle, Instructor, Construction Trades, SPSCC; Chris Wells, United Way of Thurston County; and Al Audette, Washington Home Builders Foundation.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.