HOUSE BILL REPORT
SB 5543

As Reported by House Committee On:
Postsecondary Education & Workforce

Title: An act relating to equity in eligibility for the college bound scholarship.

Brief Description: Providing equity in eligibility for the college bound scholarship.

Sponsors: Senators Boehnke, Slatter, Hasegawa, Nobles, Ramos, Valdez and Wilson, C.; by request of State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Brief History:
Committee Activity:
Postsecondary Education & Workforce: 3/18/25, 3/26/25 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands eligibility for the College Bound Scholarship to students who have received a high school equivalency certificate.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Paul, Chair; Nance, Vice Chair; Ybarra, Ranking Minority Member; Entenman, Leavitt, Mendoza, Pollet, Reed, Salahuddin, Thomas and Timmons.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives McEntire, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Rude.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Graham, Keaton, Ley and Schmidt.

Staff: Saranda Ross (786-7068).

Background:

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.

The College Bound Scholarship (CBS) provides recipients who attend two-year or four-year public institutions of higher education an award to cover the cost of tuition and fees, minus any state-funded grant, scholarship, or waiver assistance. Recipients attending public institutions also receive $500 for books and materials. The CBS awards for recipients at private institutions may be covered at public tuition rates.

To receive the CBS, a resident student must graduate from high school with at least a C grade point average, have no felony convictions, and have a family income that does not exceed 65 percent of the state median family income. There is no high school grade point average requirement for students to receive the CBS at a community or technical college. Recipients must maintain satisfactory academic progress, and may not receive the scholarship for more than six full-time years.

Dependent students and students who were dependent but adopted between the ages of 14 to 18 can satisfy the requirement to graduate from high school with at least a C grade point average by instead receiving a high school equivalency certificate.

A dependent student is a student who has been abandoned; is abused or neglected by a person legally responsible for the student's care; has no parent, guardian, or custodian capable of adequately caring for the student; or is receiving extended foster care services.

Summary of Bill:

Eligibility for the CBS is expanded to students who have received a high school equivalency certificate.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill adds a high school equivalency certificate to the list of credentials, making a student eligible for the CBS. All other paths to a postsecondary credential are specifically called out in statute. This change will place these students on an equal status which aligns with the intent of the scholarship and provides equity to these Washington residents. This bill will lead to more individuals in Washington accessing postsecondary education and fulfilling valuable roles in the workforce.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Matt Boehnke, prime sponsor; and Troy Goracke, WA State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.