

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5115

As of January 16, 2025

Title: An act relating to creating the Washington dream act service incentive program.

Brief Description: Creating the Washington dream act service incentive program.

Sponsors: Senators Valdez, Trudeau, Hasegawa, Krishnadasan, Nobles, Saldaña and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/16/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the Washington Service Incentive Grant Program to award eligible students for completion of service hours for approved institutions or organizations.
- Directs the Office of Student Financial Assistance in the Washington Student Achievement Council to disperse grant awards in coordination with institutions of higher education.
- Specifies award amounts, eligible service, and approved organizations, including limitations on hours and service in political or religious advocacy.
- Clarifies that, among other requirements, participating students must not qualify for federally funded student financial aid because of their citizenship status in order to qualify for program eligibility.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

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 Student Achievement Council. The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) is a state agency consisting of nine voting members. WSAC provides strategic planning, oversight, advocacy, and program administration to support increased student success and higher levels of educational attainment. The Office of Student Financial Assistance (Office) operates within the WSAC. The Office administers state and federal financial aid, and other education service programs.

Financial Aid Applications. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a federal financial aid application used to determine a student's eligibility for federal financial aid. The Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) is used by students who do not fill out a FAFSA, which includes undocumented students or those who do not qualify for federal financial aid due to immigration status. The WASFA is administered by WSAC.

Summary of Bill: Dream Act Service Incentive Grant Program. The Washington Dream Act Service Incentive Grant Program is established for the purpose of awarding grants to eligible students for community or voluntary service. The Office shall disperse grant awards to institutions for the awarding of grants for the completion of hours of service for an approved institution or organization, beginning in the 2025-26 academic year.

Grant awards shall be based on an eligible student's financial need and shall be calculated based on the number of hours of service to be performed per week multiplied by the weeks in the academic term multiplied by the adjusted minimum wage rate calculated by the Department of Labor and Industries, with consideration of other awarded financial aid.

Grant awards shall be disbursed by the institution of higher education at the beginning of the academic term.

The community or volunteer service performed by the participating student may not exceed 19 hours per week, and may not be advocacy of a political or religious nature.

The Office shall establish a standardized method of verification of completed service for participating students. If a participating student does not provide required documentation, the institution of higher education shall lease the estimated award in a nondisbursing status.

Preference for program participation must be given to students not eligible for participation in the state work study program.

A grant awarded under the program shall not offset or replace other sources of grant aid, including, but not limited to, institutional aid and scholarships.

Student Eligibility. In order to be eligible to participate in the grant program, a student must:

- be a resident student as defined in state law;

- complete the WASFA;
- indicate that they will attend an institution of higher education or that they are enrolled for at least six quarter credits or the semester equivalent, as defined in rule by the Office;
- demonstrate financial need as defined by the Office; and
- must not qualify for federal financial aid because of their immigration status.

Determination of a student's eligibility for the grant program shall be made by the office of student financial aid of the institution of higher education in which the student is enrolled or has indicated they will attend.

Organization and Institution Eligibility, Participation. In order for community or volunteer service to be eligible for the grant program, the organization or institution must register with the Office and be one of the following:

- a federal, state, or local governmental entity;
- an institution of higher education located in the state of Washington;
- an organization exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the federal internal revenue code;
- a Washington-operating private sector for-profit business entity which agrees to provide hours of service for eligible students of a demonstratable benefit related to the student's postsecondary educational pursuits; or
- any other entity approved by the Office.

The following types of institutions, organizations, or entities are not eligible to participate:

- those directing students to perform service in positions that directly involve religious worship, exercise, or instruction;
- those directing students to perform service in positions that directly involve political activity, including partisan and nonpartisan political activity;
- those that do not comply with appropriate federal, state, and civil rights laws; and
- those in which a participating student is an owner, part owner, board member, or executive.

An approved institution, organization, or entity must report the service hours of the participating students according to the process established by the Office.

Appropriation: The bill contains a null and void clause requiring specific funding be provided in an omnibus appropriation act.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

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