

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5304

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education & Workforce Development, January 30, 2025
Ways & Means, February 18, 2025

Title: An act relating to expanding eligibility for the students experiencing homelessness and foster youth program to an accredited tribal college.

Brief Description: Expanding eligibility for the students experiencing homelessness and foster youth program to an accredited tribal college.

Sponsors: Senators Kauffman, Nobles, Frame, Hasegawa, Krishnadasan, Lias, Riccelli, Slatter, Trudeau, Valdez and Wilson, C.; by request of Student Achievement Council.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/23/25, 1/30/25 [DP-WM].

Ways & Means: 2/10/25, 2/18/25 [DP, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands participation in the Students Experiencing Homelessness and Foster Youth Program to a public tribal college.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Nobles, Chair; Hansen, Vice Chair; Warnick, Ranking Member; Boehnke and Slatter.

Staff: Kellee Gunn (786-7429)

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.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Robinson, Chair; Stanford, Vice Chair, Operating; Trudeau, Vice Chair, Capital; Frame, Vice Chair, Finance; Gildon, Ranking Member, Operating; Torres, Assistant Ranking Member, Operating; Schoesler, Ranking Member, Capital; Dozier, Assistant Ranking Member, Capital; Boehnke, Cleveland, Conway, Dhingra, Hansen, Hasegawa, Kauffman, Muzzall, Riccelli, Saldaña, Wagoner, Warnick, Wellman and Wilson, C..

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Pedersen.

Staff: Michele Alishahi (786-7433)

Background: Students Experiencing Homelessness and Foster Youth Program. In 2019, the Legislature established pilot programs to provide assistance and accommodations to students experiencing homelessness and to students who were in foster care when they graduated from high school.

The participating community and technical colleges (CTCs) and four-year institutions provided accommodations to homeless students and students who were in foster care at high school graduation. The accommodations included:

- access to laundry facilities, storage, locker rooms and showers, and technology;
- reduced-price meals or meal plans;
- access to short-term housing or housing assistance, especially during seasonal breaks; and
- case management services.

In 2021 and 2022, the Students Experiencing Homelessness and Foster Youth Program (program) expanded to additional CTCs and public baccalaureate institutions, for a total of eight CTC institutions and four baccalaureates. In 2023, the program became permanent and made it so all CTCs and the public four-year institutions could participate in the program subject to appropriations.

Northwest Indian College. Northwest Indian College's main campus is located on the Lummi Indian Reservation in Washington State, 20 miles south of the Canadian border. It is the only accredited tribal college serving the states of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. It is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU).

Summary of Bill: The program is expanded to include participation from a public tribal college. The tribal college must be located in Washington and be accredited by NWCCU or another accrediting association recognized by the United States Department of Education.

Appropriation: None.

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.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Higher Education & Workforce Development):

PRO: For these students, having an opportunity to go to higher education is extraordinary. This program provides access to essential facilities, such as laundry, and other accommodations. Northwest Indian College offers services that are culturally relevant and important to these students. This will fill a gap, ensuring that these students receive accommodations at other public institutions. According to the WSAC basic needs survey, 90 percent of Northwest Indian College students have indicated food and housing insecurity. Our college does have a food pantry, but our students need more.

I am an enrolled member of Makah Tribe, and am attending Northwest Indian College. When I started my college journey, I was a homeless student, with children, and a widow. I now serve as a student account specialist, helping other students who need help. I was a recipient of student supports, and acknowledge how life changing this support can be.

Persons Testifying (Higher Education & Workforce Development): PRO: Senator Claudia Kauffman, Prime Sponsor; Joel Anderson, Washington Student Achievement Council; Natasha Brennan, Northwest Indian College; Christina Hoekstra, Northwest Indian College.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Higher Education & Workforce Development): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness has provided nearly 12,000 students at risk of homelessness or those who have aged out of the foster care system with basic needs support in the five years since it was created. This program helps students persist and complete degrees and credentials with 94 percent of those receiving support at our public baccalaureates. In Washington, Native American and Alaska Native students report the highest rates of basic needs insecurity among all our postsecondary students with nearly 82 percent experiencing some form of food or housing insecurity or homelessness. We're grateful for the Northwest Indian College's collaboration on drafting this bill and active support of this legislation which will enable them to better serve local students who are experiencing housing insecurity.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Joel Anderson, Washington Student Achievement Council.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.