SENATE BILL REPORT
SB 5543

As Passed Senate, March 7, 2025

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: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/06/25, 2/10/25 [DP-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/17/25, 2/28/25 [DP].
Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 3/7/25, 49-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

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

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: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass.

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.

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, Braun, Cleveland, Conway, Dhingra, Hansen, Hasegawa, Kauffman, Muzzall, Pedersen, Riccelli, Saldaña, Wagoner, Warnick, Wellman and Wilson, C..

Staff: Michele Alishahi (786-7433)

Background: 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 students 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.

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: These scholarships help some of the most vulnerable communities. The sharing of knowledge lifts all boats. The bill will clarify the credential eligibility, placing all students

in equal status. The bill makes it clear that students using this pathway can continue their education to the next level, removing barriers and improving their lives.

Persons Testifying (Higher Education & Workforce Development): PRO: Senator Matt Boehnke, Prime Sponsor; Troy Goracke, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Kenny Austin, Adult Education Advisory Council.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: Coming out of the pandemic, many students who were college bound for one reason or another did not continue through high school to their high school diploma. This is where community and technical colleges continually step in for GEDs and we did about 4000 GEDs in 2024. This is another opportunity to make a commitment to students who have otherwise taken a different path to finishing their high school diploma. And then also while they're with us, we open their eyes and opportunities to a myriad of other pathways to family wage work. It would make sense to require a minimum college GPA of 2.0 as a condition of continuing a program, but certainly not as a prerequisite to the program.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: John Axtell; Arlen Harris, State Board for Community & Technical Colleges.

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