SENATE BILL REPORT
SB 5543

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education & Workforce Development, February 10, 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].

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)

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.

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.

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 four 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: 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: 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: No one.