
SENATE BILL 5275

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Senators Nobles, Slatter, Hasegawa, Lias, Saldaña, Valdez, and C. Wilson

Read first time 01/15/25. Referred to Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development.

1 AN ACT Relating to modifying funding and award levels for the
2 passport to careers program, and permitting students eligible for the
3 passport to careers program to automatically qualify as income-
4 eligible for the purpose of receiving the Washington college grant;
5 amending RCW 28B.76.525, 28B.117.020, and 28B.117.030; reenacting and
6 amending RCW 28B.92.200; and adding a new section to chapter 28B.117
7 RCW.

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

9 **Sec. 1.** RCW 28B.76.525 and 2020 c 357 s 910 are each amended to
10 read as follows:

11 (1) The state financial aid account is created in the custody of
12 the state treasurer. The primary purpose of the account is to ensure
13 that all appropriations designated for financial aid through
14 statewide student financial aid programs are made available to
15 eligible students. The account shall be a nontreasury account.

16 (2) The office shall deposit in the account all money received
17 for the Washington college grant program established under chapter
18 28B.92 RCW, the state work-study program established under chapter
19 28B.12 RCW, the Washington scholars program established under RCW
20 28A.600.110, the Washington award for vocational excellence program
21 established under RCW 28C.04.525, (~~and~~) the educational opportunity

1 grant program established under chapter 28B.101 RCW, and the passport
2 to careers program established under chapter 28B.117 RCW. The account
3 shall consist of funds appropriated by the legislature for the
4 programs listed in this subsection and private contributions to the
5 programs. Moneys deposited in the account do not lapse at the close
6 of the fiscal period for which they were appropriated. Both during
7 and after the fiscal period in which moneys were deposited in the
8 account, the office may expend moneys in the account only for the
9 purposes for which they were appropriated, and the expenditures are
10 subject to any other conditions or limitations placed on the
11 appropriations.

12 (3) Expenditures from the account shall be used for scholarships
13 to students eligible for the programs according to program rules and
14 policies. For the 2019-2021 fiscal biennium, expenditures may also be
15 used for scholarship awards in the passport to career program
16 established under chapter 28B.117 RCW. It is the intent of the
17 legislature that this policy will be continued in subsequent fiscal
18 biennia.

19 (4) Disbursements from the account are exempt from appropriations
20 and the allotment provisions of chapter 43.88 RCW.

21 (5) Only the director of the office or the director's designee
22 may authorize expenditures from the account.

23 **Sec. 2.** RCW 28B.92.200 and 2024 c 323 s 1 and 2024 c 116 s 1 are
24 each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

25 (1) The Washington college grant program is created to provide a
26 statewide free college program for eligible participants and greater
27 access to postsecondary education for Washington residents. The
28 Washington college grant program is intended to increase the number
29 of high school graduates and adults that can attain a postsecondary
30 credential and provide them with the qualifications needed to compete
31 for job opportunities in Washington.

32 (2) The office shall implement and administer the Washington
33 college grant program and is authorized to establish rules necessary
34 for implementation of the program.

35 (3) The legislature shall appropriate funding for the Washington
36 college grant program. Allocations must be made on the basis of
37 estimated eligible participants enrolled in eligible institutions of
38 higher education or apprenticeship programs. All eligible students

1 are entitled to a Washington college grant beginning in academic year
2 2020-21.

3 (4) The office shall award Washington college grants to all
4 eligible students beginning in academic year 2020-21.

5 (5) To be eligible for the Washington college grant, students
6 must meet the following requirements:

7 (a)(i) Demonstrate financial need under RCW 28B.92.205;

8 (ii) Receive one or more of the following types of public
9 assistance:

10 (A) Aged, blind, or disabled assistance benefits under chapter
11 74.62 RCW;

12 (B) Essential needs and housing support program benefits under
13 RCW 43.185C.220; or

14 (C) Pregnant women assistance program financial grants under RCW
15 74.62.030; (~~(D)~~)

16 (iii) Be a Washington high school student in the 10th, 11th, or
17 12th grade whose parent or legal guardian is receiving one or more of
18 the types of public assistance listed in (a)(ii) of this subsection
19 and have received a certificate confirming eligibility from the
20 office in accordance with RCW 28B.92.225; (~~(D)~~)

21 (iv) Beginning in the 2025-26 academic year, be a Washington high
22 school student in the 10th, 11th, or 12th grade who is a member of an
23 assistance unit receiving benefits under the Washington basic food
24 program in chapter 74.04 RCW or the Washington food assistance
25 program established under RCW 74.08A.120; or

26 (v) Beginning in the 2025-26 academic year, be eligible for the
27 passport to careers program as provided in RCW 28B.117.030(4);

28 (b)(i) Be enrolled or accepted for enrollment for at least three
29 quarter credits or the equivalent semester credits at an institution
30 of higher education in Washington as defined in RCW 28B.92.030; or

31 (ii) Be enrolled in a registered apprenticeship program approved
32 under chapter 49.04 RCW;

33 (c) Be a resident student as defined in RCW 28B.15.012(2) (a)
34 through (e);

35 (d) File an annual application for financial aid as approved by
36 the office; and

37 (e) Must not have earned a baccalaureate degree or higher from a
38 postsecondary institution.

1 (6) Washington college grant eligibility may not extend beyond
2 six years or 150 percent of the published length of the program in
3 which the student is enrolled or the credit or clock-hour equivalent.

4 (7) Institutional aid administrators shall determine whether a
5 student eligible for the Washington college grant in a given academic
6 year may remain eligible for the ensuing year if the student's family
7 income increases by no more than three percent.

8 (8) Qualifications for receipt and renewal include maintaining
9 satisfactory academic progress toward completion of an eligible
10 program as determined by the office and established in rule.

11 (9) Should a recipient terminate his or her enrollment for any
12 reason during the academic year, the unused portion of the grant
13 shall be returned to the state educational grant fund by the
14 institution of higher education according to the institution of
15 higher education's policy for issuing refunds, except as provided in
16 RCW 28B.92.070.

17 (10) An eligible student enrolled on a part-time basis shall
18 receive a prorated portion of the Washington college grant for any
19 academic period in which he or she is enrolled on a part-time basis.

20 (11) The Washington college grant is intended to be used to meet
21 the costs of postsecondary education for students with financial
22 need. The student shall be awarded all need-based financial aid for
23 which the student qualifies as determined by the institution.

24 (12) Students and participating institutions of higher education
25 shall comply with all the rules adopted by the council for the
26 administration of this chapter.

27 **Sec. 3.** RCW 28B.117.020 and 2022 c 78 s 7 are each amended to
28 read as follows:

29 The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter
30 unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

31 (1) "Apprentice" means a person enrolled in a state-approved,
32 federally registered, or reciprocally recognized apprenticeship
33 program.

34 (2) "Apprenticeship" means an apprenticeship training program
35 approved or recognized by the state apprenticeship council or similar
36 federal entity.

37 (3) "Cost of attendance" means the cost associated with attending
38 a particular institution of higher education as determined by the
39 office, including but not limited to tuition, fees, room, board,

1 books, personal expenses, and transportation, plus the cost of
2 reasonable additional expenses incurred by an eligible student and
3 approved by a financial aid administrator at the student's school of
4 attendance.

5 (4) "Federal foster care system" means the foster care program
6 under the federal unaccompanied refugee minors program, Title 8
7 U.S.C. Sec. 1522 of the immigration and nationality act of 1965, as
8 amended.

9 (5) "Financial need" means the difference between a student's
10 cost of attendance and the student's total (~~family contribution~~)
11 student aid index as determined by the method prescribed by the
12 United States department of education.

13 (6) "Homeless" or "homelessness" means without a fixed, regular,
14 and adequate nighttime residence as set forth in the federal
15 McKinney-Vento homeless assistance act, 42 U.S.C. Sec. 11301 et seq.

16 (7) "Independent college or university" means a private,
17 nonprofit institution of higher education, open to residents of the
18 state, providing programs of education beyond the high school level
19 leading to at least the baccalaureate degree, and accredited by the
20 Northwest association of schools and colleges, and other institutions
21 as may be developed that are approved by the student achievement
22 council as meeting equivalent standards as those institutions
23 accredited under this section.

24 (8) "Institution of higher education" means any institution
25 eligible to and participating in the Washington college grant
26 program.

27 (9) "Occupational-specific costs" means the costs associated with
28 entering an apprenticeship or preapprenticeship, including but not
29 limited to fees, tuition for classes, work clothes, rain gear, boots,
30 occupation-specific tools.

31 (10) "Office" means the office of student financial assistance.

32 (11) "Preapprenticeship" means an apprenticeship preparation
33 program recognized by the state apprenticeship council and as defined
34 in RCW 28C.18.162.

35 (12) "Program" means the passport to careers program created in
36 this chapter.

37 (13) "State foster care system" means out-of-home care pursuant
38 to a dependency and includes the placement of dependents from other
39 states who are placed in Washington pursuant to orders issued under

1 the interstate compact on the placement of children, chapter 26.34
2 RCW.

3 (14) "Tribal court" has the same meaning as defined in RCW
4 13.38.040.

5 (15) "Tribal foster care system" means an out-of-home placement
6 under a dependency order from a tribal court.

7 (16) "Unaccompanied" means a youth or young adult experiencing
8 homelessness while not in the physical custody of a parent or
9 guardian.

10 **Sec. 4.** RCW 28B.117.030 and 2024 c 323 s 4 are each amended to
11 read as follows:

12 (1) The office shall design and ~~((, to the extent funds are~~
13 ~~appropriated for this purpose,))~~ implement ~~((,))~~ passport to careers
14 with two programmatic pathways: The passport to college promise
15 program and the passport to apprenticeship opportunities program.
16 Both programs offer supplemental scholarship and student assistance
17 for students who were under the care of the state foster care system,
18 tribal foster care system, or federal foster care system, and
19 verified unaccompanied youth or young adults who have experienced
20 homelessness.

21 (2) The office shall convene and consult with an advisory
22 committee to assist with program design and implementation. The
23 committee shall include but not be limited to former foster care and
24 unaccompanied homeless youth and their advocates; representatives
25 from the state board for community and technical colleges, public and
26 private agencies that assist current and former foster care
27 recipients and unaccompanied youth or young adults experiencing
28 homelessness in their transition to adulthood; student support
29 specialists from public and private colleges and universities; the
30 state workforce training and education coordinating board; the
31 employment security department; and the state apprenticeship council.

32 (3) ~~((To the extent that sufficient funds have been appropriated~~
33 ~~for this purpose, a))~~ The legislature shall appropriate funding for
34 the passport to careers program. Appropriations must be made on the
35 basis of estimated eligible participants enrolled in eligible
36 institutions of higher education or apprenticeship programs. All
37 eligible students are entitled to a passport to careers award
38 beginning in the 2025-26 academic year.

1 (4) A student is eligible for assistance under this section if he
2 or she:

3 (a) (i) Was in the care of the state foster care system, tribal
4 foster care system, or federal foster care system in Washington state
5 at any time before age twenty-one subsequent to the following:

6 (A) Age fifteen as of July 1, 2018;

7 (B) Age fourteen as of July 1, 2019; and

8 (C) Age thirteen as of July 1, 2020; or

9 (ii) Beginning July 1, 2019, was verified on or after July 1st of
10 the prior academic year as an unaccompanied youth experiencing
11 homelessness, before age twenty-one;

12 (b) Is a resident student, as defined in RCW 28B.15.012(2), or if
13 unable to establish residency because of homelessness or placement in
14 out-of-state foster care under the interstate compact for the
15 placement of children, has residency determined through verification
16 by the office;

17 (c) Is enrolled with or will enroll on at least a half-time basis
18 with an institution of higher education or a registered
19 apprenticeship or recognized preapprenticeship in Washington state by
20 the age of twenty-one;

21 (d) Is making satisfactory academic progress toward the
22 completion of a degree, certificate program, or registered
23 apprenticeship or recognized preapprenticeship, if receiving
24 supplemental scholarship assistance;

25 (e) Has not earned a bachelor's or professional degree; and

26 (f) Is not pursuing a degree in theology.

27 (~~(4)~~) (5) The office shall define a process for verifying
28 unaccompanied homeless status for determining eligibility under
29 subsection (~~(3)~~) (4)(a)(ii) of this section. The office may use a
30 letter from the following persons or entities to provide
31 verification: A high school or school district McKinney-Vento
32 liaison; the director or designated staff member of an emergency
33 shelter, transitional housing program, or homeless youth drop-in
34 center; or other similar professional case manager or school
35 employee. Students who have no formal connection with such a
36 professional may also submit to the office an essay that describes
37 their experience with homelessness and the barriers it created to
38 their academic progress. The office may consider this essay in lieu
39 of a letter of homelessness determination and may interview the
40 student if further information is needed to verify eligibility.

1 ~~((5))~~ (6) A passport to college promise program is created.

2 (a) A passport to college promise scholarship under this
3 section(~~(÷~~

4 ~~(i) Shall not exceed resident undergraduate tuition and fees at
5 the highest-priced public institution of higher education in the
6 state; and~~

7 ~~(ii) Shall~~) shall be \$5,000 annually beginning in the 2025-26
8 academic year and may increase annually by the tuition growth factor
9 defined in RCW 28B.92.030; however, the scholarship may not exceed
10 the student's financial need, when combined with all other public and
11 private grant, scholarship, and waiver assistance the student
12 receives.

13 (b) Passport to college promise scholarship eligibility may not
14 extend beyond six years or 150 percent of the published length of the
15 program in which the student is enrolled or the credit or clock-hour
16 equivalent.

17 (c) The office, in consultation with and with assistance from the
18 state board for community and technical colleges, shall perform an
19 annual analysis to verify that those institutions of higher education
20 at which students have received a scholarship under this section have
21 awarded the student all available need-based and merit-based grant
22 and scholarship aid for which the student qualifies.

23 (d) In designing and implementing the passport to college promise
24 student support program under this section, the office, in
25 consultation with and with assistance from the state board for
26 community and technical colleges, shall ensure that a participating
27 college or university:

28 (i) Has a viable plan for identifying students eligible for
29 assistance under this section, for tracking and enhancing their
30 academic progress, for addressing their unique needs for assistance
31 during school vacations and academic interims, and for linking them
32 to appropriate sources of assistance in their transition to
33 adulthood;

34 (ii) Receives financial and other incentives for achieving
35 measurable progress in the recruitment, retention, and graduation of
36 eligible students.

37 (e) To the extent funds are appropriated for this specific
38 purpose, the office shall contract with at least one nongovernmental
39 entity to provide services to support effective program

1 implementation, resulting in increased postsecondary completion rates
2 for passport scholars.

3 ~~((+6))~~ (7) The passport to apprenticeship opportunities program
4 is created. The office shall:

5 (a) Identify students and applicants who are eligible for
6 services under (~~RCW 28B.117.030~~ [~~this section~~]) this section
7 through coordination of certain agencies as detailed in RCW
8 28B.117.040;

9 (b) Provide financial assistance through the nongovernmental
10 entity or entities in RCW 28B.117.055 for registered apprenticeship
11 and recognized preapprenticeship entrance requirements and
12 occupational-specific costs that does not exceed the individual's
13 financial need; and

14 (c) Extend financial assistance to any eligible applicant for six
15 years or 150 percent of the published length of the program in which
16 the student is enrolled or the credit or clock-hour equivalent.

17 ~~((+7))~~ (8) Recipients may utilize passport to college promise or
18 passport to apprenticeship opportunities at different times, but not
19 concurrently. The total award an individual may receive in any
20 combination of the programs shall not exceed the equivalent amount
21 that would have been awarded for the individual to attend a public
22 university for six years with the highest annual tuition and state-
23 mandated fees in the state.

24 ~~((+8))~~ (9) Personally identifiable information shared pursuant
25 to this section retains its confidentiality and may not be further
26 disclosed except as allowed under state and federal law.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.117
28 RCW to read as follows:

29 The caseload forecast council shall estimate the anticipated
30 caseload of the passport to careers program and submit the caseload
31 forecast as specified in RCW 43.88C.020.

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