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**SENATE BILL 5543**

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**State of Washington**

**69th Legislature**

**2025 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Boehnke, Slatter, Hasegawa, Nobles, Ramos, Valdez, and C. Wilson; by request of State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

Read first time 01/28/25. Referred to Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development.

1 AN ACT Relating to equity in eligibility for the college bound  
2 scholarship; and amending RCW 28B.118.010.

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

4 **Sec. 1.** RCW 28B.118.010 and 2024 c 323 s 2 are each amended to  
5 read as follows:

6 The office of student financial assistance shall design the  
7 Washington college bound scholarship program in accordance with this  
8 section and in alignment with the Washington college grant program in  
9 chapter 28B.92 RCW unless otherwise provided in this section. The  
10 right of an eligible student to receive a college bound scholarship  
11 vest upon enrollment in the program that is earned by meeting the  
12 requirements of this section as it exists at the time of the  
13 student's enrollment under subsection (2) of this section.

14 (1) "Eligible students" are those students who:

15 (a) Qualify for free or reduced-price lunches.

16 (i) If a student qualifies in the seventh or eighth grade, the  
17 student remains eligible even if the student does not receive free or  
18 reduced-price lunches thereafter.

19 (ii) Beginning in the 2019-20 academic year, if a student  
20 qualifies for free or reduced-price lunches in the ninth grade and  
21 was previously ineligible during the seventh or eighth grade while he

1 or she was a student in Washington, the student is eligible for the  
2 college bound scholarship program;

3 (b) Are dependent pursuant to chapter 13.34 RCW and:

4 (i) In grade seven through 12; or

5 (ii) Are between the ages of 18 and 21 and have not graduated  
6 from high school; or

7 (c) Were dependent pursuant to chapter 13.34 RCW and were adopted  
8 between the ages of 14 and 18 with a negotiated adoption agreement  
9 that includes continued eligibility for the Washington state college  
10 bound scholarship program pursuant to RCW 74.13A.025.

11 (2)(a) Every eligible student shall be automatically enrolled by  
12 the office of student financial assistance, with no action necessary  
13 by the student, student's family, or student's guardians.

14 (b) Eligible students and the students' parents or guardians  
15 shall be notified of the student's enrollment in the Washington  
16 college bound scholarship program and the requirements for award of  
17 the scholarship by the office of student financial assistance. To the  
18 maximum extent practicable, an eligible student must acknowledge  
19 enrollment in the college bound scholarship program and receipt of  
20 the requirements for award of the scholarship.

21 (c) The office of the superintendent of public instruction and  
22 the department of children, youth, and families must provide the  
23 office of student financial assistance with a list of eligible  
24 students when requested. The office of student financial assistance  
25 must determine the most effective methods, including timing and  
26 frequency, to notify eligible students of enrollment in the  
27 Washington college bound scholarship program. The office of student  
28 financial assistance must take reasonable steps to ensure that  
29 eligible students acknowledge enrollment in the college bound  
30 scholarship program and receipt of the requirements for award of the  
31 scholarship. The office of student financial assistance shall also  
32 make available to every school district information, brochures, and  
33 posters to increase awareness and to enable school districts to  
34 notify eligible students directly or through school teachers,  
35 counselors, or school activities.

36 (3) Except as provided in subsection (4) of this section, an  
37 eligible student must:

38 (a)(i) Graduate from a public high school under RCW  
39 28A.150.010((7)) or an approved private high school under chapter  
40 28A.195 RCW in Washington, have received a high school equivalency

1 certificate under RCW 28B.50.536, or have received home-based  
2 instruction under chapter 28A.200 RCW; and

3 (ii) For eligible students enrolling in a postsecondary  
4 educational institution for the first time beginning with the 2023-24  
5 academic year, graduate with at least a "C" average for consideration  
6 of direct admission to a public or private four-year institution of  
7 higher education;

8 (b) Have no felony convictions;

9 (c) Be a resident student as defined in RCW 28B.15.012(2) (a)  
10 through (e); and

11 (d) Have a family income that does not exceed 65 percent of the  
12 state median family income at the time of high school graduation.

13 (4) ~~((a))~~ An eligible student who is a resident student under  
14 RCW 28B.15.012(2)(e) must also provide the institution, as defined in  
15 RCW 28B.15.012, an affidavit indicating that the individual will file  
16 an application to become a permanent resident at the earliest  
17 opportunity the individual is eligible to do so and a willingness to  
18 engage in any other activities necessary to acquire citizenship,  
19 including but not limited to citizenship or civics review courses.

20 ~~((b) For eligible students as defined in subsection (1)(b) and  
21 (c) of this section, a student may also meet the requirement in  
22 subsection (3)(a) of this section by receiving a high school  
23 equivalency certificate as provided in RCW 28B.50.536.))~~

24 (5)(a) For students attending two or four-year institutions of  
25 higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, the value of the award  
26 shall be (i) the difference between the student's tuition and  
27 required fees, less the value of any state-funded grant, scholarship,  
28 or waiver assistance the student receives; (ii) plus five hundred  
29 dollars for books and materials.

30 (b) For students attending private four-year institutions of  
31 higher education in Washington, the award amount shall be the  
32 representative average of awards granted to students in public  
33 research universities in Washington or the representative average of  
34 awards granted to students in public research universities in  
35 Washington in the 2014-15 academic year, whichever is greater.

36 (c) For students attending private vocational schools in  
37 Washington, the award amount shall be the representative average of  
38 awards granted to students in public community and technical colleges  
39 in Washington or the representative average of awards granted to

1 students in public community and technical colleges in Washington in  
2 the 2014-15 academic year, whichever is greater.

3 (6) Eligible students must enroll no later than the fall term, as  
4 defined by the institution of higher education, one academic year  
5 following high school graduation. College bound scholarship  
6 eligibility may not extend beyond six years or 150 percent of the  
7 published length of the program in which the student is enrolled or  
8 the credit or clock-hour equivalent.

9 (7) Institutions of higher education shall award the student all  
10 need-based and merit-based financial aid for which the student would  
11 otherwise qualify. The Washington college bound scholarship is  
12 intended to replace unmet need, loans, and, at the student's option,  
13 work-study award before any other grants or scholarships are reduced.

14 (8) The first scholarships shall be awarded to students  
15 graduating in 2012.

16 (9) The eligible student has a property right in the award, but  
17 the state of Washington retains legal ownership of tuition units  
18 awarded as scholarships under this chapter until the tuition units  
19 are redeemed. These tuition units shall remain separately held from  
20 any tuition units owned under chapter 28B.95 RCW by a Washington  
21 college bound scholarship recipient.

22 (10) Should the recipient terminate his or her enrollment for any  
23 reason during the academic year, the unused portion of the  
24 scholarship tuition units shall revert to the Washington college  
25 bound scholarship account.

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