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**SENATE BILL 5789**

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**State of Washington**

**69th Legislature**

**2025 Regular Session**

**By** Senator Gildon

1 AN ACT Relating to restoring state financial aid assistance to a  
2 maximum of 125 percent of credits needed to graduate; amending RCW  
3 28B.118.010, 28B.118.005, and 28B.117.030; reenacting and amending  
4 RCW 28B.92.200; adding a new section to chapter 28B.77 RCW; and  
5 creating a new section.

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

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

9 (1) The Washington college grant program is created to provide a  
10 statewide free college program for eligible participants and greater  
11 access to postsecondary education for Washington residents. The  
12 Washington college grant program is intended to increase the number  
13 of high school graduates and adults that can attain a postsecondary  
14 credential and provide them with the qualifications needed to compete  
15 for job opportunities in Washington.

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

19 (3) The legislature shall appropriate funding for the Washington  
20 college grant program. Allocations must be made on the basis of  
21 estimated eligible participants enrolled in eligible institutions of

1 higher education or apprenticeship programs. All eligible students  
2 are entitled to a Washington college grant beginning in academic year  
3 2020-21.

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

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

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

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

11 (A) Aged, blind, or disabled assistance benefits under chapter  
12 74.62 RCW;

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

15 (C) Pregnant women assistance program financial grants under RCW  
16 74.62.030; (~~(e)~~)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

38 (6) Washington college grant eligibility may not extend beyond  
39 (~~six~~) five years or (~~150~~) 125 percent of the published length of

1 the program in which the student is enrolled or the credit or clock-  
2 hour equivalent.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

28 The office of student financial assistance shall design the  
29 Washington college bound scholarship program in accordance with this  
30 section and in alignment with the Washington college grant program in  
31 chapter 28B.92 RCW unless otherwise provided in this section. The  
32 right of an eligible student to receive a college bound scholarship  
33 vest upon enrollment in the program that is earned by meeting the  
34 requirements of this section as it exists at the time of the  
35 student's enrollment under subsection (2) of this section.

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

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

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

4 (ii) Beginning in the 2019-20 academic year, if a student  
5 qualifies for free or reduced-price lunches in the ninth grade and  
6 was previously ineligible during the seventh or eighth grade while he  
7 or she was a student in Washington, the student is eligible for the  
8 college bound scholarship program;

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

10 (i) In grade seven through 12; or

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

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

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

20 (b) Eligible students and the students' parents or guardians  
21 shall be notified of the student's enrollment in the Washington  
22 college bound scholarship program and the requirements for award of  
23 the scholarship by the office of student financial assistance. To the  
24 maximum extent practicable, an eligible student must acknowledge  
25 enrollment in the college bound scholarship program and receipt of  
26 the requirements for award of the scholarship.

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

1 notify eligible students directly or through school teachers,  
2 counselors, or school activities.

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

5 (a)(i) Graduate from a public high school under RCW 28A.150.010,  
6 an approved private high school under chapter 28A.195 RCW in  
7 Washington, or have received home-based instruction under chapter  
8 28A.200 RCW; and

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

14 (b) Have no felony convictions;

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

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

19 (4)(a) An eligible student who is a resident student under RCW  
20 28B.15.012(2)(e) must also provide the institution, as defined in RCW  
21 28B.15.012, an affidavit indicating that the individual will file an  
22 application to become a permanent resident at the earliest  
23 opportunity the individual is eligible to do so and a willingness to  
24 engage in any other activities necessary to acquire citizenship,  
25 including but not limited to citizenship or civics review courses.

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

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

36 (b) For students attending private four-year institutions of  
37 higher education in Washington, the award amount shall be the  
38 representative average of awards granted to students in public  
39 research universities in Washington or the representative average of

1 awards granted to students in public research universities in  
2 Washington in the 2014-15 academic year, whichever is greater.

3 (c) For students attending private vocational schools in  
4 Washington, the award amount shall be the representative average of  
5 awards granted to students in public community and technical colleges  
6 in Washington or the representative average of awards granted to  
7 students in public community and technical colleges in Washington in  
8 the 2014-15 academic year, whichever is greater.

9 (6) Eligible students must enroll no later than the fall term, as  
10 defined by the institution of higher education, one academic year  
11 following high school graduation. (~~College bound scholarship~~  
12 ~~eligibility may not extend beyond six years or 150 percent of the~~  
13 ~~published length of the program in which the student is enrolled or~~  
14 ~~the credit or clock-hour equivalent)) Eligible students may receive  
15 no more than four full time years' worth of scholarship awards within  
16 five years after graduating from high school.~~

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

22 (8) The first scholarships shall be awarded to students  
23 graduating in 2012.

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

30 (10) The scholarship award must be used within five years of  
31 receipt. Any unused scholarship tuition units revert to the  
32 Washington college bound scholarship account.

33 (11) Should the recipient terminate his or her enrollment for any  
34 reason during the academic year, the unused portion of the  
35 scholarship tuition units shall revert to the Washington college  
36 bound scholarship account.

37 **Sec. 3.** RCW 28B.118.005 and 2024 c 323 s 3 are each amended to  
38 read as follows:

1       The legislature intends to inspire and encourage all Washington  
2 students to dream big by creating a guaranteed four-year tuition  
3 scholarship program for students from low-income families who enroll  
4 within one year of high school graduation. The legislature finds  
5 that, too often, financial barriers prevent many of the brightest  
6 students from considering college as a future possibility. Often the  
7 cost of tuition coupled with the complexity of finding and applying  
8 for financial aid is enough to prevent a student from even applying  
9 to college. Many students become disconnected from the education  
10 system early on and may give up or drop out before graduation. It is  
11 the intent of the legislature to alert students early in their  
12 educational career to the options and opportunities available beyond  
13 high school.

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

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

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

36       (3) To the extent that sufficient funds have been appropriated  
37 for this purpose, a student is eligible for assistance under this  
38 section if he or she:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

39 (5) A passport to college promise program is created.

40 (a) A passport to college promise scholarship under this section:



1 (i) Shall not exceed resident undergraduate tuition and fees at  
2 the highest-priced public institution of higher education in the  
3 state; and

4 (ii) Shall not exceed the student's financial need, when combined  
5 with all other public and private grant, scholarship, and waiver  
6 assistance the student receives.

7 (b) Passport to college promise scholarship eligibility may not  
8 extend beyond (~~six~~) five years or (~~150~~) 125 percent of the  
9 published length of the program in which the student is enrolled or  
10 the credit or clock-hour equivalent.

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

17 (d) In designing and implementing the passport to college promise  
18 student support program under this section, the office, in  
19 consultation with and with assistance from the state board for  
20 community and technical colleges, shall ensure that a participating  
21 college or university:

22 (i) Has a viable plan for identifying students eligible for  
23 assistance under this section, for tracking and enhancing their  
24 academic progress, for addressing their unique needs for assistance  
25 during school vacations and academic interims, and for linking them  
26 to appropriate sources of assistance in their transition to  
27 adulthood;

28 (ii) Receives financial and other incentives for achieving  
29 measurable progress in the recruitment, retention, and graduation of  
30 eligible students.

31 (e) To the extent funds are appropriated for this specific  
32 purpose, the office shall contract with at least one nongovernmental  
33 entity to provide services to support effective program  
34 implementation, resulting in increased postsecondary completion rates  
35 for passport scholars.

36 (6) The passport to apprenticeship opportunities program is  
37 created. The office shall:

38 (a) Identify students and applicants who are eligible for  
39 services under (~~RCW 28B.117.030 [this section]~~) this section

1 through coordination of certain agencies as detailed in RCW  
2 28B.117.040;

3 (b) Provide financial assistance through the nongovernmental  
4 entity or entities in RCW 28B.117.055 for registered apprenticeship  
5 and recognized preapprenticeship entrance requirements and  
6 occupational-specific costs that does not exceed the individual's  
7 financial need; and

8 (c) Extend financial assistance to any eligible applicant for  
9 ~~((six))~~ five years or ~~((150))~~ 125 percent of the published length of  
10 the program in which the student is enrolled or the credit or clock-  
11 hour equivalent.

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

19 (8) Personally identifiable information shared pursuant to this  
20 section retains its confidentiality and may not be further disclosed  
21 except as allowed under state and federal law.

22 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.77  
23 RCW to read as follows:

24 The council shall report to the legislature annually on this act  
25 and, as applicable, the impact of chapter 323, Laws of 2024. The  
26 report must include degree completion outcomes, including any changes  
27 in the number of students utilizing the grant and scholarship  
28 programs of this act and chapter 323, Laws of 2024.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** Sections 1 through 4 of this act apply to  
30 eligible students beginning with academic year 2026-27.

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