
SENATE BILL 5963

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2026 Regular Session

By Senators Nobles, Saldaña, Chapman, Hasegawa, Shewmake, Valdez, and C. Wilson; by request of Student Achievement Council

Prefiled 01/05/26. Read first time 01/12/26. Referred to Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development.

1 AN ACT Relating to modifying funding for the passport to careers
2 program, and permitting students eligible for the passport to careers
3 program to automatically qualify as income-eligible for the purpose
4 of receiving the Washington college grant; amending RCW 28B.76.525
5 and 28B.117.020; and reenacting and amending RCW 28B.92.200.

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

7 **Sec. 1.** RCW 28B.76.525 and 2025 c 424 s 926 are each amended to
8 read as follows:

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

14 (2) The office shall deposit in the account all money received
15 for the Washington college grant program established under chapter
16 28B.92 RCW, the state work-study program established under chapter
17 28B.12 RCW, the Washington scholars program established under RCW
18 28A.600.110, the Washington award for vocational excellence program
19 established under RCW 28C.04.525, ~~((and))~~ the educational opportunity
20 grant program established under chapter 28B.101 RCW, and the passport
21 to careers program established under chapter 28B.117 RCW. The account

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

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

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

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

21 (6) During the 2025-2027 fiscal biennium, the legislature may
22 direct the state treasurer to transfer money in the state financial
23 aid account to the state general fund.

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

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

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

36 (3) The legislature shall appropriate funding for the Washington
37 college grant program. Allocations must be made on the basis of
38 estimated eligible participants enrolled in eligible institutions of
39 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 2026-27 academic year, be eligible for the
27 passport to careers program as provided in RCW 28B.117.030(3);

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.

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