
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5978

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2026 Regular Session

By Senate Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Hansen, Hasegawa, Lias, Nobles, Shewmake, and Slatter)

READ FIRST TIME 01/30/26.

1 AN ACT Relating to making higher education more accessible by
2 establishing the Washington guaranteed admissions program and
3 requiring student notifications; adding a new section to chapter
4 28B.10 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28A.150 RCW; and creating
5 a new section.

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

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that engaging with
8 high school students to prepare them for higher education and
9 familiarize them with college admissions through guaranteed
10 admissions increases equity, access, and credential completion in the
11 state. The legislature intends to establish the Washington guaranteed
12 admissions program as an appropriate and necessary step to accomplish
13 these goals.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.10
15 RCW to read as follows:

16 (1) The Washington guaranteed admissions program is established
17 in collaboration with the state's public four-year institutions of
18 higher education specified in subsection (2) of this section.

19 (2)(a) The regional universities, the state college, and at least
20 one campus of each state university shall participate in the

1 Washington guaranteed admissions program beginning in the 2027-28
2 academic year.

3 (b) Institutions in (a) of this subsection may opt out of the
4 Washington guaranteed admissions program by reporting to the
5 legislature, in accordance with RCW 43.01.036, the following:

6 (i) The reason for opting out; and

7 (ii) A detailed overview of other initiatives for improving
8 admissions and expanding access to the institution for resident
9 students.

10 (3) Beginning with the 2027-28 academic year, participating
11 institutions shall simplify and streamline the general admissions
12 application form requiring only necessary information for students.

13 (4) Beginning with the 2027-28 academic year, participating
14 institutions shall determine, and annually review, eligibility
15 criteria for the Washington guaranteed admissions program and shall
16 notify the office of the superintendent of public instruction of the
17 criteria to enable clear data sharing protocols. Participating
18 institutions may coordinate through an organization representing the
19 presidents of the public four-year institutions of higher education.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.150
21 RCW to read as follows:

22 (1)(a) Beginning with the 2027-28 school year, each school
23 district, charter school, state-tribal education compact school, and
24 institutional education provider with students in grade 11 or 12 who
25 are members of the Washington school information processing
26 cooperative shall use the statewide digital transcript data-sharing
27 environment developed and maintained by the Washington school
28 information processing cooperative to facilitate the secure,
29 standards-compliant transfer of transcript data for students in
30 grades 11 and 12 who meet the eligibility criteria established
31 pursuant to section 2(4) of this act. The Washington school
32 information processing cooperative must consider this a core function
33 of membership and not charge additional fees for this use of the
34 data-sharing environment or for the transfer of data.

35 (b) By July 1, 2027, the office of the superintendent of public
36 instruction shall work with the Washington school information
37 processing cooperative to develop a process to facilitate the
38 transfer of data required under (a) of this subsection for school
39 districts, charter schools, state-tribal education compact schools,

1 and institutional education providers that are not members of the
2 Washington school information processing cooperative without an
3 additional cost and without requiring membership in the Washington
4 school information processing cooperative.

5 (c) Beginning with the 2028-29 school year, the Washington school
6 information processing cooperative shall work with participating
7 institutions to facilitate the transfer of data required under this
8 subsection. Participating organizations may coordinate with an
9 organization representing the presidents of the public four-year
10 institutions of higher education to facilitate the transfer of data
11 required under this subsection.

12 (2) School districts, charter schools, state-tribal education
13 compact schools, and institutional education providers must allow for
14 a student or family to opt-out of the data sharing outlined in this
15 section and must communicate that option with families.

16 (3) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this
17 section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

18 (a) "Charter school" means a school established under chapter
19 28A.710 RCW.

20 (b) "Institutional education provider" has the same meaning as in
21 RCW 28A.190.005.

22 (c) "Participating institutions" are those public baccalaureate
23 institutions that have not opted out of the program.

24 (d) "State-tribal education compact school" means a school
25 subject to chapter 28A.715 RCW.

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