
SENATE BILL 6209

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2026 Regular Session

By Senators Wellman, Boehnke, Dozier, and Nobles

Read first time 01/19/26. Referred to Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development.

1 AN ACT Relating to financial aid awards for students attending
2 private four-year institutions of higher education; amending RCW
3 28B.92.030; reenacting and amending RCW 28B.118.010; and adding a new
4 section to chapter 28B.92 RCW.

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

6 **Sec. 1.** RCW 28B.92.030 and 2025 c 395 s 2 are each amended to
7 read as follows:

8 The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter
9 unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

10 (1) "Council" means the student achievement council.

11 (2) "Financial aid" means either loans, grants, or both, to
12 students who demonstrate financial need enrolled or accepted for
13 enrollment as a student at institutions of higher education.

14 (3) "Financial need" means a demonstrated financial inability to
15 bear the total cost of education as directed in rule by the office.

16 (4) "Institution" or "institutions of higher education" means:

17 (a) Any public university, college, community college, or
18 technical college operated by the state of Washington or any
19 political subdivision thereof; or

20 (b) Any other university, college, school, or institute in the
21 state of Washington offering instruction beyond the high school level

1 that is a member institution of an accrediting association recognized
2 by rule of the council for the purposes of this section and that
3 agrees to and complies with program rules adopted pursuant to RCW
4 28B.92.150. However, any institution, branch, extension or facility
5 operating within the state of Washington that is affiliated with an
6 institution operating in another state must be:

7 (i) A separately accredited member institution of any such
8 accrediting association;

9 (ii) A branch of a member institution of an accrediting
10 association recognized by rule of the council for purposes of this
11 section, that is eligible for federal student financial aid
12 assistance and has operated as a nonprofit college or university
13 delivering on-site classroom instruction for a minimum of 20
14 consecutive years within the state of Washington, and has an annual
15 enrollment of at least 700 full-time equivalent students;

16 (iii) A nonprofit institution recognized by the state of
17 Washington as provided in RCW 28B.77.240; or

18 (iv) An approved apprenticeship program under chapter 49.04 RCW.

19 (5) "Maximum Washington college grant":

20 (a) For students attending two or four-year institutions of
21 higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, is tuition and
22 estimated fees for 15 quarter credit hours or the equivalent, as
23 determined by the office, including operating fees, building fees,
24 and services and activities fees.

25 (b) For students attending private four-year not-for-profit
26 institutions of higher education in Washington:

27 (i) In the 2019-20 academic year, is \$9,739 and may increase each
28 year afterwards by no more than the tuition growth factor through the
29 end of the 2025-26 academic year; and

30 (ii) Beginning in the 2026-27 academic year, is 50 percent of the
31 average of awards for the same academic year granted to students at
32 the public research institutions in Washington.

33 (c) For students attending two-year private not-for-profit
34 institutions of higher education in Washington, in the 2019-20
35 academic year, is \$3,694 and may increase each year afterwards by no
36 more than the tuition growth factor.

37 (d) For students attending four-year private for-profit
38 institutions of higher education in Washington(~~(7-in)~~):

39 (i) In the 2019-20 academic year, is eight thousand five hundred
40 seventeen dollars and may increase each year afterwards by no more

1 than the tuition growth factor, until the end of the 2025-26 academic
2 year; and

3 (ii) Beginning in the 2026-27 academic year, if the institution
4 meets the requirements established in section 3 of this act, is 50
5 percent of the average of awards for the same academic year granted
6 to students at the public research institutions in Washington.

7 (e) For students attending two-year private for-profit
8 institutions of higher education in Washington, in the 2019-20
9 academic year, is two thousand eight hundred twenty-three dollars and
10 may increase each year afterwards by no more than the tuition growth
11 factor, until the end of the 2025-26 academic year.

12 (f) For students attending Western Governors University-
13 Washington, as established in RCW 28B.77.240:

14 (i) In the 2019-20 academic year, is \$5,619 and may increase each
15 year afterwards by no more than the tuition growth factor through the
16 2025-26 academic year; and

17 (ii) Beginning in the 2026-27 academic year, is \$4,150 and may
18 increase each year afterwards by no more than the tuition growth
19 factor.

20 (~~(e)~~ ~~[(g)]~~) (g) For students attending approved apprenticeship
21 programs:

22 (i) In the 2022-23 academic year, is the same amount as the
23 maximum Washington college grant for students attending two-year
24 institutions of higher education as defined in (a) of this subsection
25 to be used for tuition and fees, program supplies and equipment, and
26 other costs that facilitate educational endeavors through the 2025-26
27 academic year; and

28 (ii) Beginning in the 2026-27 academic year, is 50 percent of the
29 maximum Washington college grant award for students attending two-
30 year institutions of higher education as defined in (a) of this
31 subsection to be used for tuition and fees, program supplies and
32 equipment, and other costs that facilitate educational endeavors.

33 (6) "Office" means the office of student financial assistance.

34 (7) "Tuition growth factor" means an increase of no more than the
35 average annual percentage growth rate of the median hourly wage for
36 Washington for the previous 14 years as the wage is determined by the
37 federal bureau of labor statistics.

38 **Sec. 2.** RCW 28B.118.010 and 2025 c 395 s 4 and 2025 c 288 s 1
39 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 (i) In grade seven through 12; or

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

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

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

30 (b) Eligible students and the students' parents or guardians
31 shall be notified of the student's enrollment in the Washington
32 college bound scholarship program and the requirements for award of
33 the scholarship by the office of student financial assistance. To the
34 maximum extent practicable, an eligible student must acknowledge
35 enrollment in the college bound scholarship program and receipt of
36 the requirements for award of the scholarship.

37 (c) The office of the superintendent of public instruction and
38 the department of children, youth, and families must provide the
39 office of student financial assistance with a list of eligible
40 students when requested. The office of student financial assistance

1 must determine the most effective methods, including timing and
2 frequency, to notify eligible students of enrollment in the
3 Washington college bound scholarship program. The office of student
4 financial assistance must take reasonable steps to ensure that
5 eligible students acknowledge enrollment in the college bound
6 scholarship program and receipt of the requirements for award of the
7 scholarship. The office of student financial assistance shall also
8 make available to every school district information, brochures, and
9 posters to increase awareness and to enable school districts to
10 notify eligible students directly or through school teachers,
11 counselors, or school activities.

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

14 (a)(i) Graduate from a public high school under RCW 28A.150.010
15 or an approved private high school under chapter 28A.195 RCW in
16 Washington, have received a high school equivalency certificate under
17 RCW 28B.50.536, or have received home-based instruction under chapter
18 28A.200 RCW; and

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

24 (b) Have no felony convictions;

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

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

29 (4) An eligible student who is a resident student under RCW
30 28B.15.012(2)(e) must also provide the institution, as defined in RCW
31 28B.15.012, an affidavit indicating that the individual will file an
32 application to become a permanent resident at the earliest
33 opportunity the individual is eligible to do so and a willingness to
34 engage in any other activities necessary to acquire citizenship,
35 including but not limited to citizenship or civics review courses.

36 (5)(a) For students attending two or four-year institutions of
37 higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, the value of the award
38 shall be (i) the difference between the student's tuition and
39 required fees, less the value of any state-funded grant, scholarship,

1 or waiver assistance the student receives; (ii) plus \$500 for books
2 and materials.

3 (b) (i) For students attending private four-year institutions of
4 higher education in Washington, the award amount shall be the average
5 of awards granted to students in public research universities in
6 Washington or the average of awards granted to students in public
7 research universities in Washington in the 2014-15 academic year,
8 whichever is greater, through the 2026-27 academic year.

9 (ii) Beginning in the 2027-28 academic year, for students
10 attending private four-year not-for-profit institutions of higher
11 education in Washington, the award amount shall be 50 percent of the
12 average of awards for the same academic year granted to students in
13 public research universities in Washington.

14 (iii) Beginning in the 2027-28 academic year, for students
15 attending private four-year for-profit institutions of higher
16 education in Washington, if the institution meets the requirements
17 established in section 3 of this act, the award amount shall be 50
18 percent of the average of awards for the same academic year granted
19 to students in public research universities in Washington.

20 (c) (i) For students attending private vocational schools in
21 Washington, the award amount shall be the average of awards granted
22 to students in public community and technical colleges in Washington
23 or the average of awards granted to students in public community and
24 technical colleges in Washington in the 2014-15 academic year,
25 whichever is greater, through the 2026-27 academic year.

26 (ii) Beginning in the 2027-28 academic year, for students
27 attending two-year private not-for-profit schools in Washington, the
28 award amount shall be the average of awards granted in the same
29 academic year to students in public community and technical colleges
30 in Washington, or the average of awards granted to students in public
31 community and technical colleges in Washington in the 2014-15
32 academic year, whichever is greater.

33 (d) Beginning in the 2027-28 academic year, for students
34 attending Western Governors University-Washington, as established in
35 RCW 28B.77.240, the award shall be \$4,650.

36 (6) Eligible students must enroll no later than the fall term, as
37 defined by the institution of higher education, one academic year
38 following high school graduation. College bound scholarship
39 eligibility may not extend beyond six years or 150 percent of the

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

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

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

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

16 (10)(a) The scholarship award must be used within six years of
17 receipt. Any unused scholarship tuition units revert to the
18 Washington college bound scholarship account.

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

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.92
24 RCW to read as follows:

25 The office shall adopt rules establishing a gainful employment
26 standard for private four-year for-profit institutions of higher
27 education that wish to participate in the Washington college grant
28 and college bound scholarship. At minimum, to be eligible to
29 participate in the Washington college grant, debt payments for
30 graduates should be no more than eight percent of annual earnings or
31 20 percent of discretionary earnings, which is defined as annual
32 earnings minus 150 percent of the federal poverty guideline for a
33 single individual. In developing this standard, the office shall take
34 into consideration program completion, and work with the education
35 research and data center on the data development and measures.

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