

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2809

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### As Reported By House Committee On:

Higher Education

**Title:** An act relating to a foster care scholarship program.

**Brief Description:** Creating a foster care scholarship program.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Kagi, McDonald, Kenney, D. Sommers, Edmonds, Tokuda, Lantz, Boldt, Clements, McIntire, Lovick, Dickerson, Anderson, Stensen, O'Brien, Miloscia, Ogden, Schual-Berke, Edwards, Wood and Santos.

### Brief History:

#### Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/4/00 [DP].

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the foster care scholarship program where eligible students can receive up to the cost of attending college minus tuition, for up to four years.
- Students must be between 16 and 23 years old, and have been in foster care a minimum of six months since their 14<sup>th</sup> birthday.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Carlson, Republican Co-Chair; Kenney, Democratic Co-Chair; Lantz, Democratic Vice Chair; Dunn; Edmonds; Esser and Gombosky.

**Staff:** Erika Prager (786-7120).

### Background:

Foster care homes provide 24-hour care to children of all ages who need temporary, out-of-home placement due to child abuse, neglect, or family conflict. Foster care is viewed as a short-term solution to an emergency situation. On any given day, there are

approximately 11,000 children in Washington state foster care. There are 4,164 licensed foster homes providing care.

Foster care in Washington is constantly changing because of the numbers, ages, and problems of children entering foster care. Providing foster children with an opportunity for higher education is viewed as a means to add stability to their lives and break the cycle of child abuse, neglect, or family conflict that created their foster care situation.

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**Summary of Bill:**

The foster care scholarship program is created. The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) administers the grant program and adopts rules as necessary. The HECB will work with the Department of Social and Health Services and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to provide information to eligible students. Eligible students may receive grant awards, up to the cost of attending college minus tuition, for a maximum of four years.

To be eligible, students must be between 16 and 23 years old, and have been in foster care a minimum of six months since their 14th birthday. Students must also be eligible for financial aid under the state student financial aid program. However, grants awarded under this program will not affect eligibility for state financial aid. Students must enter a higher education institution within three years of high school graduation and make satisfactory progress toward degree completion. Students cannot pursue a degree in theology.

Grants may be used to attend a public or private nonprofit institution of higher education in Washington. They can also be used to attend other institutions that are approved by the HECB as meeting equivalent standards of the public or private nonprofit institutions.

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**Appropriation:** The sum of \$100,000.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** Foster care children already face many barriers in life. This program is a step toward giving them a chance. The state claims to help foster care children build their future, but they are tossed out when they are 18 years old. Only 30 percent of them graduate from high school. This scholarship is an incentive for many more to finish. Foster care children do not have a mom or dad to lean on if they do not get financial aid for college. It is difficult to get scholarships because many foster care students have poor grades as a result of having an unstable home environment.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Alan Willoughby, foster parent; Nicole Webb, student; Janis Avery, Treehouse; Sage Kleuger and Nicole Bradley, college students; and Monica Wick, Youth Care.