

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1466

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to higher education scholarships.

Brief Description: Creating the Washington promise scholarship.

Sponsors: Representatives Fromhold, Cox, Kenney, Conway, Kessler, Jackley, Rockefeller, Hunt, Haigh, Lovick, Schual-Berke, Edmonds, Simpson, Kagi, Ruderman, Santos, Wood and McIntire; by request of Governor Locke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/5/01, 2/9/01 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a statute for the merit and need-based scholarship program administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board. Scholarships have been awarded since 1999.
- Eligible students may receive up to two years of tuition at the community college full-time tuition rate.
- Scholarships are awarded to students graduating from public and approved private high schools and students participating in home-based instruction who meet academic and financial eligibility criteria.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Cox, Republican Co-Chair; Kenney, Democratic Co-Chair; Gombosky, Democratic Vice Chair; Jarrett, Republican Vice Chair; Dunn, Fromhold, Lantz and Skinner.

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

The Washington Promise Scholarship is established. This merit and need-based scholarship, implemented by the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB), is awarded to students based on two specific eligibility criteria. The award consists of two years' tuition at the community college full-time tuition rate. Currently, the Promise Scholarship is not established in statute. However, the Legislature appropriated \$11.4 million during the 1999-2001 biennium.

Summary of Bill:

The Promise Scholarship must be administered by the HECB. The scholarships are not intended to supplant any grant, scholarship, or tax program related to postsecondary education. Each qualifying student will receive two consecutive annual awards, the value of each not to exceed the full-time annual resident tuition rates charged by Washington's community colleges.

The scholarships may only be used for undergraduate course work at accredited institutions of higher education in the state of Washington, and they may not be awarded to any student pursuing a degree in theology. The scholarships may be used for college-related expenses including tuition, room and board, books, materials, etc.

Eligibility is based on academic merit and student family income.

Academic eligibility

Students must graduate in the top 15 percent of their graduating class or students must equal or exceed a cumulative scholastic aptitude test score of 1200 on their first attempt.

Financial eligibility

A student's family income shall not exceed 135 percent of the state median family income adjusted for family size, as determined by the HECB for each graduating class. Students not meeting the financial eligibility requirements for the first year of scholarship benefits may reapply for the second year of benefits, but must still meet the income standard set by the board for the student's graduating class.

Implementation

The HECB will administer the scholarship, with the assistance of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Public and approved private high schools will provide requested information for academic eligibility to OSPI, and OSPI, in turn, will provide this information to the HECB.

All money for the scholarship is deposited into an account in the custody of the State

Treasurer. The HECB shall award scholarships to as many students as possible from among those qualifying and will determine the award amount dependent upon availability of funds.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 1, 2001.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: (In support) The Promise Scholarship has enabled many students to attend college that otherwise would not have been able to do so without school loans or without having students who may not be eligible for the state need grants or other types of financial aid. The higher education community supports this bill.

(With concerns) Concerns were voiced to include passing the certificate of mastery on the first try as an eligibility requirement. Another concern was voiced about limiting students' attendance at institutions of higher education under sectarian control or influence.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Representative Fromhold, prime sponsor; Jim Crawford and Sara Simpson, Office of Financial Management; Michael Johnson, Washington Student Lobby; Bruce Botka, Higher Education Coordinating Board; Dan Gomez, student; Jacob Waunch, student; Samreth Sam, student; and Sister Kathleen Ross, Washington Association of Independent Colleges and University.

(With concerns) Rainier Houser, Association of Washington School Principals; Jerry Sheehan, American Civil Liberties Union of Washington; and Gayle Pauley and Bob Butts, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.