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**SENATE BILL 5201**

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**State of Washington**

**57th Legislature**

**2001 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Kohl-Welles, Deccio, Winsley, Carlson, Sheahan, Swecker, Jacobsen, Hargrove, B. Sheldon, Shin, McAuliffe and Fairley

Read first time 01/15/2001. Referred to Committee on Higher Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to increasing access to education for recipients of  
2 temporary assistance for needy families; amending RCW 74.08A.250;  
3 adding new sections to chapter 74.08A RCW; and creating new sections.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that recent studies  
6 show a powerful relationship between postsecondary education and an  
7 increase in lifetime earned income. Even just two years of college can  
8 equate to a quarter of a million dollar increase in lifetime income.  
9 A bachelor's degree can boost annual income seventy-three percent,  
10 compared to a high school degree. In addition, studies indicate that  
11 for individuals attending college, there is a correlation with improved  
12 health status, increased civic participation, improved savings rates,  
13 less reliance on government assistance, and improved quality of life  
14 for their children. Additionally, this correlates to increased tax  
15 revenues and reduced crime rates for society. The legislature finds  
16 that some welfare recipients could qualify for college admission and  
17 benefit from completion of their higher education at a community,  
18 trade, or technical college, or other institute of higher education.

1 The federal government has specifically encouraged creative  
2 approaches to higher education for welfare recipients, and several  
3 other states have enacted legislation to this end. In Washington  
4 state, there is currently a shortage of skilled workers, with  
5 sixty-four percent of Washington employers reporting difficulty in  
6 finding qualified applicants in 2000. The scarcity of workers with  
7 postsecondary training affects many businesses, and has severe  
8 implications for the state's economy. Skill requirements are expected  
9 to continue to increase. In order to close the postsecondary skills  
10 gap, Washington will need significantly more advanced workers in the  
11 coming months and years, and enabling welfare clients to achieve their  
12 educational goals will help solve this problem.

13 In 1999, the federal government adopted final regulations for  
14 temporary assistance for needy families, allowing expanded use of block  
15 grant and maintenance of effort funds. These funds can be used  
16 creatively for a variety of special approaches, to help poor families  
17 achieve true financial independence.

18 The legislature intends to provide access to postsecondary  
19 education for qualified adult recipients of temporary assistance for  
20 needy families, while maintaining the emphasis on employment that is  
21 the hallmark of the WorkFirst program. The legislature intends to  
22 provide temporary assistance for needy families grants, including  
23 working connections child care and tuition assistance, to college-  
24 qualified individuals, with the goal of providing a means for highly  
25 motivated welfare recipients to successfully complete college, exit  
26 assistance, and secure careers to benefit themselves, their families,  
27 and society.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The department shall establish the HELP  
29 program. The goal of the program is to help college-qualified parents  
30 who have dependent children in need and are eligible for temporary  
31 assistance for needy families receive up to two years of undergraduate  
32 education or training. Annually the department shall provide parents  
33 accepted into or enrolled at an institution of higher education in  
34 Washington state with assistance that includes their temporary  
35 assistance for needy families cash grants, as well as the other support  
36 services provided to recipients of temporary assistance for needy  
37 families, including but not limited to medical assistance, working  
38 connections child care, food stamps, tuition assistance based upon

1 actual tuition or public higher education tuition rates, whichever is  
2 less, and other support services. The department may facilitate access  
3 to Pell grants and state need grants.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** Unless the context clearly requires  
5 otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout sections 2  
6 through 10 of this act.

7 (1) "HELP program" means the higher education for lifelong progress  
8 program.

9 (2) "Institution of higher education" means the state research  
10 universities, the regional universities, The Evergreen State College,  
11 the community colleges, the technical colleges, and private career  
12 schools, colleges, and universities.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) Families that qualify for temporary  
14 assistance for needy families under this chapter may participate in the  
15 HELP program as a countable work activity of the temporary assistance  
16 for needy families program. Eligibility for assistance, and the amount  
17 of assistance, shall be determined under criteria used in the temporary  
18 assistance for needy families program. Because participation in the  
19 HELP program satisfies the countable work activity requirement, the  
20 department shall not impose an additional work requirement upon HELP  
21 participants.

22 (2) The department shall assess the educational program to  
23 determine whether the completion of the program is likely to result in  
24 employment that provides the wages and benefits necessary for the  
25 applicant to support the applicant's family without public assistance.

26 (3) To the extent that funds are available, enrollment in the  
27 program shall be granted if the department determines that:

28 (a) The applicant intends to pursue higher education in a field  
29 with a high probability of wage progression and likely to enable the  
30 applicant to exit assistance; and

31 (b) Considering potential employment opportunities and local labor  
32 market conditions, the undergraduate education sought by the individual  
33 is likely to improve the ability of the family to be self-supporting.

34 The applicant shall meet the requirements for the state need grant  
35 under RCW 28B.10.800 through 28B.10.820 and qualify for acceptance at  
36 and be admitted to an institution of higher education in the state.

1        NEW SECTION.     **Sec. 5.**     The department shall recommend that  
2 applicants obtain career planning and counseling services from their  
3 educational institutions to assist them in choosing an educational plan  
4 that is likely to lead to self-sufficiency, and provide to students who  
5 have begun an educational program assistance to overcome barriers to  
6 completing the program and becoming employed. The department may work  
7 with other state, local, and private entities to provide the planning  
8 and counseling services.

9        NEW SECTION.     **Sec. 6.**     Students receiving assistance under sections  
10 2 through 10 of this act shall meet the following requirements:

11        (1) They must be accepted into a postsecondary program; and

12        (2) They must be enrolled full-time, with the expectation that they  
13 make satisfactory progress toward a degree, certificate, or license in  
14 a field likely to create a high probability of employment and wage  
15 progression. Satisfactory progress may be evidenced by earning at  
16 least a 2.5 grade point average.

17        NEW SECTION.     **Sec. 7.**     The department shall inform all persons  
18 applying for or participating in the temporary assistance for needy  
19 families program of the option to apply for the HELP program and the  
20 criteria for acceptance. Recipients of temporary assistance for needy  
21 families who have already partially completed their postsecondary  
22 education will be encouraged to apply and be given priority.

23        NEW SECTION.     **Sec. 8.**     To the extent permitted by federal law,  
24 assistance received under sections 2 through 10 of this act must be  
25 disregarded as income and excluded as a resource or asset to the same  
26 extent as assistance under the temporary assistance for needy families  
27 program, under this chapter, for the purposes of any state, federal,  
28 tribal, or municipal assistance program. Assistance received under  
29 sections 2 through 10 of this act must be treated in the same manner as  
30 assistance received under the temporary assistance for needy families  
31 program under this chapter for all tax purposes. Furthermore, the  
32 department shall implement the program so participants qualify for food  
33 stamps until completion of their degree or certificate.

1        NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 9.**    (1) The department shall contract with the  
2 Washington state institute for public policy for the performance of an  
3 outcome study of program participants. The study shall, at a minimum:

4        (a) Track degree or certificate completion by participants;

5        (b) Report on wage progression of participants;

6        (c) Report on the program's dropout rate, including temporary  
7 assistance for needy families' recidivism;

8        (d) Quantify the projected increase in lifetime earnings of program  
9 graduates; and

10       (e) Report on self-identified enhancers and barriers to success in  
11 postsecondary education experience by the study population.

12       (2) The results of the outcome study shall be reported annually, no  
13 later than January 15th, beginning in 2003, to the governor and to  
14 appropriate committees of the legislature.

15       NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 10.**    Participation in the HELP program shall be  
16 incorporated in the recipient's individual personal responsibility  
17 plan, in a manner that clearly indicates that satisfactory progress in  
18 college is the recipient's temporary assistance for needy families work  
19 activity and responsibility.

20       **Sec. 11.**    RCW 74.08A.250 and 2000 c 10 s 1 are each amended to read  
21 as follows:

22       Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, as used in this  
23 chapter, "work activity" means:

24       (1) Unsubsidized paid employment in the private or public sector;

25       (2) Subsidized paid employment in the private or public sector,  
26 including employment through the state or federal work-study program  
27 for a period not to exceed twenty-four months;

28       (3) Work experience, including:

29       (a) An internship or practicum, that is paid or unpaid and is  
30 required to complete a course of vocational training or to obtain a  
31 license or certificate in a high demand field, as determined by the  
32 employment security department. No internship or practicum shall  
33 exceed twelve months; or

34       (b) Work associated with the refurbishing of publicly assisted  
35 housing, if sufficient paid employment is not available;

36       (4) On-the-job training;

37       (5) Job search and job readiness assistance;

- 1 (6) Community service programs;
- 2 (7) Vocational educational training, not to exceed twelve months  
3 with respect to any individual;
- 4 (8) Job skills training directly related to employment;
- 5 (9) Education directly related to employment, in the case of a  
6 recipient who has not received a high school diploma or a GED;
- 7 (10) Satisfactory attendance at secondary school or in a course of  
8 study leading to a GED, in the case of a recipient who has not  
9 completed secondary school or received such a certificate;
- 10 (11) The provision of child care services to an individual who is  
11 participating in a community service program;
- 12 (12) Internships, that shall be paid or unpaid work experience  
13 performed by an intern in a business, industry, or government or  
14 nongovernmental agency setting;
- 15 (13) Practicums, which include any educational program in which a  
16 student is working under the close supervision of a professional in an  
17 agency, clinic, or other professional practice setting for purposes of  
18 advancing their skills and knowledge; ((and))
- 19 (14) Services required by the recipient under RCW 74.08.025(3) and  
20 74.08A.010(3) to become employable; and
- 21 (15) Participation in the higher education for lifelong progress  
22 program.

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 12.** The department shall adopt rules to  
24 implement sections 2 through 10 of this act.

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 13.** Sections 2 through 10 and 12 of this act  
26 are each added to chapter 74.08A RCW.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 14.** If any part of this act is found to be in  
28 conflict with federal requirements that are a prescribed condition to  
29 the allocation of federal funds to the state, the conflicting part of  
30 this act is inoperative solely to the extent of the conflict and with  
31 respect to the agencies directly affected, and this finding does not  
32 affect the operation of the remainder of this act in its application to  
33 the agencies concerned. Rules adopted under this act must meet federal

1 requirements that are a necessary condition to the receipt of federal  
2 funds by the state.

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