

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1277

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, March 27, 2003

Title: An act relating to gaining independence for students by establishing an educational assistance grant program for students with dependents.

Brief Description: Gaining independence for students by creating the educational assistance grant program for financially needy students with dependents.

Sponsors: House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Kenney, Cox, Jarrett, Chase, Veloria, Kessler and Upthegrove).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 3/24/03, 3/27/03 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Carlson, Chair; Schmidt, Vice Chair; Horn, Kohl-Welles, Mulliken, B. Sheldon and Shin.

Staff: Dario de la Rosa (786-7484)

Background: Under the State Need Grant Program, students with dependents are given a dependent care allowance in addition to the base grant. For the years 2002-2003, the maximum allowance is \$643 per year for a full-time student regardless of the number of qualifying dependents. To receive the dependent care allowance, the student must provide documentation that the dependent care expenses are needed. Dependents must be living with the student and be someone other than the student's spouse.

Summary of Bill: The Gaining Independence for Students with Dependents Program is created. To qualify for the program, resident students must meet all State Need Grant requirements, as well as have a dependent or dependents 18 years of age or younger under their care. Qualifying students may use the grants to attend any accredited public or private college or university in the state of Washington. The minimum grant is \$1,000 per academic year. The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) administers the program and may solicit and receive private funds to deposit in an account with the State Treasurer that keeps its own interest. HECB administrative duties are triggered when the balance in the account reaches \$500,000. The HECB is authorized to adjust the amount of the grant to account for any supplanting or reduction of any other grant, scholarship, or tax program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Many low-income parents would like to return to school to better support their families, but face the challenge of paying for that education. Good jobs require some sort of higher education. This program helps low-income students who have dependents pay for school, and hopefully will allow them to increase their earning potential and benefit Washington's workforce.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Phyllis Kenny, prime sponsor; Bruce Botka, Higher Education Coordinating Board (pro); Sall Zeiger Hanson, State Board for Technical and Community Colleges (pro); Julie Watts, Washington Association of Churches (pro); Julilly Kohler Hansmann, Poverty Action Network (pro).