

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESB 5676

As Passed Senate, March 17, 2003

Title: An act relating to the educational opportunity grant program.

Brief Description: Changing provisions in the educational opportunity grant program.

Sponsors: Senators Carlson, Kohl-Welles, Mulliken, Shin and Schmidt; by request of Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/24/03, 3/3/03 [DP].
Passed Senate: 3/17/03, 49-0.

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: Jean Six (786-7423)

Background: The Educational Opportunity Grant Program (EOG) was created in 1990 as a demonstration project to expand opportunities for needy Washington students with transfer degrees to obtain a baccalaureate degree. Eligibility for the grants was originally limited to placebound students living in one of the 13 counties served by the newly created branch campuses and attending any accredited public or private college or university except a branch campus. The grant amount of up to \$2,500 does not exceed the student's financial need. Creation of EOG was based on an assumption that the size and cost of branch campus development might be reduced by encouraging students to attend another institution with enrollment capacity -- especially a private college or university concerned that branch campuses could reduce enrollments in the private sector.

The program is administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) which has completed an evaluation of the program and recommends certain changes to the program to reflect the current educational climate.

Summary of Bill: Eligible, needy students applying for EOG may live in any of Washington's 39 counties rather than being limited to the 13 counties served by a branch campus. The same residency standards used for the State Need Grant apply to the EOG. To be eligible for the grant, in addition to completion of an Associate of Arts Degree, students may have completed an Associate of Science Degree.

EOG awards may be used at any accredited higher education institution approved for participation by the HECB, including branch campuses and in-state programs affiliated with

colleges or universities accredited in other states. The restriction that grants are for attendance at institutions with unused enrollment capacity is removed.

Grant amounts are set by the HECB and the \$2,500 maximum per year is now the minimum.

Eligibility for the Promise Scholarship is expanded to include students 21 years of age or younger who receive a GED certificate and on their first attempt receive a score of 1200 on the SAT I or 27 on the ACT.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Expanding eligibility for the EOG provides additional access to baccalaureate degrees for placebound upper division students. The program will become more competitive as more students become eligible to apply. Students are appreciative of financial assistance toward achieving baccalaureate degrees. In 1990, the EOG was one of three strategies developed to increase access to baccalaureate degrees. In addition to the EOG, the state began the development of branch campuses and lifted enrollment lids. The EOG was crafted to maximize the unused capacity at the private colleges and universities it was a political strategy at the time. The HECB requests three changes to the EOG program: (1) eliminate the county restrictions, (2) allow the use of the EOG at branch campuses, and (3) change the \$2500 maximum to a minimum. The program will not be expanded beyond current funding of \$2.9, but the competition for the dollars will be increased.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Bruce Botka, HECB; Tom Parker, WAICU; Kay Lewis, Director of Financial Aid, UW; Brook Lather, WSL, GPS, UW.

House Amendment(s): Grant amounts remain limited in statute to up to \$2,500 per academic year.