

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1050

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Higher Education

**Title:** An act relating to the creation of a foster care endowed scholarship program.

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

**Sponsors:** Representatives Kenney, Hinkle, Kagi, Dunn, Quall, Clements, Morrell, McIntire, Schual-Berke, Haigh, Simpson, Linville, Santos and Chase.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Higher Education: 1/21/05, 1/25/05 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Creates an endowed scholarship program administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) for foster care youth and former foster care youth ages 16 to 23 years.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Kenney, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Cox, Ranking Minority Member; Buri, Fromhold, Hasegawa, Ormsby, Priest, Roberts, Rodne, Sommers and Walsh.

**Staff:** Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

**Background:**

When the state intervenes to remove children from their homes in cases of abuse, neglect, parental substance abuse, or family conflict, these children are placed in foster care homes. While some of these children eventually are returned to their own homes, others remain in the foster care system until reaching adulthood. When these foster care youth age out of the system at adulthood, they may be entering the adult world with little or no guidance or support for their transition.

Concerns over foster care youth have prompted various foundations and non-profit organizations to begin collecting data and proposing ways to help these young adults. A 2001 study by Casey Family Partners found that when compared with non-foster care youth, foster

care youth are less likely to be enrolled in college preparatory programs, are twice as likely to drop out of high school, and are significantly underrepresented in post-secondary programs.

In response to these and similar findings, various state agencies recently have partnered with the Washington Education Foundation and other nonprofit entities to create the Foster Care to College Partnership. This partnership coordinates its efforts to provide support services, information, and college scholarship aid to youth in permanent, state-supported foster care.

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### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

An endowed scholarship program is created for financially needy foster care youth and former foster care youth ages 16 to 23 years who have been in the state's foster care system six months or longer since turning 14 years of age. Students must be Washington residents and enrolled or planning to enroll in a post-secondary program within three years of graduating from high school or earning a general equivalency diploma.

The HECB may work with the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to publicize the program to eligible students 16 years of age and older and also may contract with a private agency to perform outreach to potentially eligible students. The HECB must establish a foster care endowed scholarship advisory board of not more than seven members reflecting the cultural diversity of Washington. The advisory board is charged with assisting the HECB in publicizing the program, soliciting grants and donations from public and private sources, and assisting in program development and the application screening process.

One hundred fifty thousand dollars from the state general fund is appropriated to the HECB for the 2006 fiscal year. The HECB may deposit \$25,000 of state matching moneys into the endowment fund created in the custody of the State Treasurer when private cash donations reach \$25,000. After the initial match, state matching moneys may be released semiannually so long as there are moneys available in the endowment trust fund. The initial \$25,000 deposited into the endowment fund will be the principal and may not be invaded.

The amount of the scholarship may not exceed the student's demonstrated financial need, as determined by the HECB after consideration of the student's costs for tuition, fees, books, supplies, transportation, room, board, personal expenses, and child care, if applicable. Receipt of a scholarship does not affect a student's eligibility for other state financial aid assistance.

### **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

Three of the duties of the HECB are made permissive rather than mandatory. The permissive duties are: publicizing the program; contracting with a private agency to provide outreach to potentially eligible youth; and working with the DSHS and the SPI to provide information about the program to foster care youth.

**Appropriation:** The sum of \$150,000 is appropriated from the state general fund to the HECB for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2006.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** The bill would help provide a source of predictable funding of scholarships for students who otherwise may have no hope of affording the cost of higher education. The lack of financial resources is a major obstacle to many foster youth and former foster youth pursuing post-secondary education. Foster youth are underrepresented in the state's higher education system. From a foster care student's perspective, this bill sends an important message that educational leaders believe in their potential for success and that they are welcomed in the higher education community. The state already has made changes in the K-12 system to assist foster youth in achieving greater academic success, and thus more foster youth are beginning to plan and prepare for higher education opportunities. The advisory committee is a good way to administer the program because the advisory committee can be a good source of fund raising of private moneys.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Persons Testifying:** Becki Collins, Higher Education Coordinating Board; Nani Jackins Park, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Kevin Clacken-Coley, Children's Alliance; and Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.