

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## ESHB 1079

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Regarding postsecondary education and training support for foster youth.

**Sponsors:** By House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Kenney, Chase, Dickerson and Schual-Berke; by request of Governor Locke).

**House Committee on Higher Education**

**Senate Committee on Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education**

**Background:**

Beginning at age 13, dependent youth in state foster care can receive Independent Living Services to help them prepare for independence. When youth emancipate, or "age out," from foster care at age 18, they are eligible to receive assistance with housing, education, and employment training until age 21. According to the 2003 Performance Report by the Children's Administration of the Department of Social and Health Services, 470 youth aged out of foster care in 2002. Of these youth, 161 planned to pursue higher education.

In 2003, legislation was enacted creating an oversight committee composed of staff from the Children's Administration, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and advocacy agencies to develop strategies for maintaining foster children in the schools they were attending at the time they entered foster care. The committee also promotes best practices in education of foster care youth.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) administers state financial aid programs for low-income students pursuing higher education. The two primary programs are the State Need Grant and State Work Study. Students are eligible for a need grant if they have a family income less than 55 percent of the state median family income, are enrolled at least part-time, and pursue a degree or certificate. A need grant is not an entitlement, but the program attempts to serve all eligible students within available funds. For the 2003-04 academic year, approximately 53,500 students received need grant awards, but 6,000 eligible students went unserved.

The State Work Study program served approximately 7,700 financially needy students in 2003-04. In its administration of the program, the HECB is directed to place a priority on state resident students, job placements that relate to the student's academic or vocational pursuits, and off-campus community service placements.

**Summary:**

The membership of the Children's Administration oversight committee on education of foster youth is expanded to include the HECB, foster youth, former foster youth, and foster parents.

The scope of responsibilities of the committee is expanded to include promotion of opportunities for foster youth to participate in postsecondary education or training.

The committee will:

- assess the statewide need among foster youth for assistance in pursuing postsecondary education and training;
- identify sources of funding to provide such assistance;
- review the effectiveness of existing activities and identify new activities to support former foster youth in pursuing postsecondary education and training; and
- review progress toward improving educational and vocational outcomes for foster youth.

The HECB, when making annual awards of state need grants, will give consideration to former foster youth. Eligible former foster youth are guaranteed a state need grant when funds from grants that were declined, forfeited, or otherwise unused are disbursed. The HECB must also place a priority on providing work opportunities for former foster youth through the State Work Study program.

A former foster youth is defined as a person who is at least 18 but not more than 24 years old and who was a dependent of the Department of Social and Health Services at the time the youth turned 18.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

House	95	0
Senate	48	0

**Effective:** July 24, 2005