
Higher Education Committee

HB 1345

Brief Description: Allowing state financial aid for part-time students.

Sponsors: Representatives Hasegawa, Kenney, Takko, Sells, Jarrett, Roberts, Ericks, Haler, Williams, Moeller, Appleton, Morrell, McCoy, Dunn, Kagi, McDermott, Santos and Chase.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands eligibility for the State Need Grant program to students enrolled for at least four credit hours per quarter at a Washington institution of higher education.

Hearing Date: 2/4/05

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

For nearly every state and federal financial aid program, students must be enrolled at least half-time to be eligible for aid. Federal guidelines permit higher education institutions to define what "half-time" means. In Washington, it means students are enrolled for at least six credits per quarter or semester.

This standard is contained in federal guidelines for subsidized loans and in rules adopted by the Higher Education Coordinating Board for the State Need Grant, Educational Opportunity Grant, Promise Scholarship, and Work Study financial aid programs. Only the federal Pell Grant provides aid for students attending less than half-time. However, there is a special calculation for these students that further reduces the amount of the award.

During the 2003-04 academic year, nearly 48,000 resident undergraduate students in community and technical colleges and an additional 3,200 students at public four-year institutions were enrolled on less than a half-time basis.

The State Need Grant is the largest state-funded financial aid program. For the 2004-05 academic year, \$125 million supports about 55,500 students attending public and independent higher education institutions. In addition to at least half-time attendance, students must have a family income of no more than 55 percent of the state median family income (\$36,500 for a family of four in 2004) and be enrolled in a degree or certificate program.

Summary of Bill:

Eligibility for the State Need Grant program is extended to students who are enrolled in a Washington institution of higher education for at least four credit hours per quarter, or the semester or clock-hour equivalent, rather than being limited to students enrolled at least half-time.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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