

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1050

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education, March 24, 2005

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

Brief Description: Creating a foster care endowed scholarship program.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Kenney, Hinkle, Kagi, Dunn, Quall, Clements, Morrell, McIntire, Schual-Berke, Haigh, Simpson, Linville, Santos and Chase).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/03/05, 96-0.

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 3/23/05, 3/24/05 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Carrell, Delvin, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Mulliken, Pflug, Rasmussen, Schoesler and Shin.

Staff: Brian Jeffries (786-7422)

Background: The Children's Administration of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) administers child welfare and licensing services, including responsibility for youth in foster care. Youth at age 18 are emancipated from foster care and are independent of the state, but can receive Independent Living Services (ILS) to help prepare them for independence prior to emancipation. For youth emancipating from foster care, ILS programs provide assistance in education, training, housing, and employment. Young adults ages 18 through 21 that have emancipated from foster care are eligible to receive assistance with housing, education, and employment training. According to the Children's Administration Performance Report 2003, 470 youth aged out of foster care in the 2002 calendar year. Of these youth, 161 reported that they planned to attend higher education.

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.

Summary of 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 Higher Education Coordinating Board (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.

The HECB may deposit twenty five thousand dollars of state matching moneys into the endowment fund created in the custody of the State Treasurer when private cash donations reach twenty five thousand dollars. 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 twenty five thousand dollars 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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: Foster care youth have a great need for support. A scholarship fund would provide these youth not only with resources to support their college education, but also provide them hope prior to attending college that financial need with not be a deterrent to attendance.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Representative Phyllis Kenney, prime sponsor; Becki Collins, HECB; Nani Jackins Park, SBCTC; Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society.