

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## 2SHB 1096

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### As Passed House:

March 8, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to creating postsecondary opportunity programs.

**Brief Description:** Creating postsecondary opportunity programs.

**Sponsors:** By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Kenney, Priest, Quall, Wallace, Conway, Haler, Morris, Ormsby, Linville, Jarrett, Dickerson, Hunt, Walsh, P. Sullivan, Darneille, Appleton, Morrell, Williams, Dunn, Schual-Berke, Fromhold, Hasegawa, Chase, Upthegrove, McCoy, Green, O'Brien, Hudgins, Sells, Springer, Moeller, Goodman, Barlow, Eddy, Santos, Simpson, Haigh, Lantz, Kagi and Rolfes).

### Brief History:

#### Committee Activity:

Community & Economic Development & Trade: 1/18/07, 1/22/07 [DPS];

Higher Education: 2/5/07 [DPS(CEDT-A HE)].

Appropriations: 2/22/07, 2/26/07 [DP2S(w/o sub CEDT)].

#### Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/8/07, 96-0.

### Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Directs the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to develop and implement the Opportunity Grant Program.
- Instructs SBCTC, business, labor, and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board to identify high demand training programs and designate them as "opportunity grant-eligible programs of study."
- Directs community and technical colleges and local workforce development councils to develop the Opportunity Partnership Program.

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## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TRADE

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Kenney, Chair; Pettigrew, Vice Chair; Bailey, Ranking Minority Member; McDonald, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chase, Darneille, Haler, Rolfes and P. Sullivan.

**Staff:** Jennifer Thornton (786-7111).

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## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill by Committee on Community & Economic Development & Trade be substituted therefor and the substitute bill as amended by Committee on Higher Education do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Wallace, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Buri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hasegawa, Jarrett, McIntire and Sommers.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Anderson, Ranking Minority Member.

**Staff:** Jennifer Thornton (786-7111).

### **Background:**

#### **Employer Needs**

Regular surveys of employers conducted by the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB), show that employers in the state consistently report difficulty finding workers for jobs with mid-level skills that require some postsecondary education, but less than a bachelor's degree. The WTECB projects job openings for new workers with mid-level skills in Washington at 31,000 annually between 2009 and 2012. The WTECB estimates that to meet this demand, an additional 1,170 full-time equivalent (FTE) workforce education students are needed annually, in addition to increases tied to student-age population growth.

#### **Unmet Financial Needs of Students**

In 2006-2007, the average cost of community and technical college attendance is \$12,900 per year, when tuition and fees, books, living expenses and transportation are included. Seven different state agencies currently administer 18 state and federally-funded workforce programs in Washington. Low-income students can apply for existing state and federal need-based aid. However, not all low-income students are eligible for need-based aid and there is no guarantee that a student will receive aid to cover all of his/her costs.

A 2006 budget proviso required the WTECB to conduct a study on financial aid and access issues for workforce education students. The study found that during 2004-05, after accessing traditional student aid and aid from workforce development programs, the remaining unmet need for students was \$97 million per year. The study found financial need to be the biggest barrier to increased student access and retention in workforce programs.

#### **Opportunity Grants Pilot Program**

The 2006 operating budget provided \$4 million for the community and technical college system to develop and implement the Opportunity Grants Pilot Program, which was designed to test strategies for increasing access to postsecondary education for low income students in job-specific programs. As of December 2006, 436 students were participating in the 10 colleges selected from across the state to participate in the pilot. A preliminary report by SBCTC stated that:

- 68 percent of Opportunity Grant participants are parents;
- the average household income for Opportunity Grant participants is less than \$11,000 per year, with an average household size of three;
- 97 percent of students who began in one of the pilot programs remain engaged and on their chosen career pathway;
- Opportunity Grant students are enrolled at all educational levels, from adult basic skills to college-level coursework;
- 51 percent of Opportunity Grant participants are enrolled in healthcare related pathways; and
- more than half of Opportunity Grant participants received a combination of Opportunity Grant awards and other forms of financial aid.

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

#### **Creation of the Opportunity Grant Program**

Subject to appropriations, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) will develop and implement the Opportunity Grant Program. Students enrolled in the program will be eligible to receive funding for tuition and fees at the public community and technical college rate, plus \$1,000 per academic year for books, tools, and supplies (both are prorated if the credit load is less than full time).

The program will be available to Washington residents enrolled in "opportunity grant-eligible programs of study" at community and technical colleges, private career schools and Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council-approved apprenticeship programs. It will be phased in as follows:

- Students who enroll prior to January 2010 must have a family income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
- Students who enroll between January 2010 and January 2012 must have a family income that is at or below the state median family income.
- After January 2012, all students in eligible programs will qualify.

A student must make satisfactory progress and maintain a cumulative 2.0 grade point average for continued eligibility. Funding is limited to 45 credits or the equivalent or three years, whichever comes first.

Colleges will receive an enhancement of \$1,500 per full-time equivalent student enrolled in the Opportunity Grant Program whose income is below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

These funds will be used for individualized support services necessary for student success. The SBCTC is accountable for student retention and program completion. They will set and monitor performance, and must reduce funding at institutions that do not meet targets.

The SBCTC and the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) will work together to ensure that students participating in the Opportunity Grant Program receive all other state and federal financial aid to which they are entitled. They will also provide answers to transition to state and federal financial aid for students who complete the Opportunity Grant Program and pursue additional education.

### **Creation of Opportunity Partnerships**

The SBCTC, in partnership with business, labor, and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB), will:

- identify high demand training programs offered by qualified postsecondary institutions that lead to a credential, certificate, or degree;
- gain recognition of the credentials, certificates, and degrees by Washington's employers and labor organizations, and designate them as "opportunity grant-eligible programs of study;" and
- market the credentials, certificates, and degrees to potential students, businesses, and apprenticeship programs.

Subject to appropriations, community and technical colleges and local workforce development councils will partner to develop the opportunity partnership program, which will provide mentoring to opportunity grant students. Participating students will be matched with a business or labor mentor employed in their field of study. The mentor will help the student explore careers and employment options through any combination of tours, informational interviews, job shadowing, and internships. The WTECB will receive funding on behalf of the opportunity partnerships. In partnership with business, labor, and the SBCTC, the WTECB will determine criteria and distribute funds for the program.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

### **Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) This bill is beneficial because it reduces student costs, presents a clear simple pathway for people to access higher education, and meets the needs of local business and industry. In this economy, young adults need at least one year of post-secondary education. Financial issues pose the most challenging obstacle for student access, particularly for adults with families returning to school who have costs beyond tuition. This bill will provide financial support, wrap-around services, mentoring and coaching, and will link people with high wage jobs.

Many of the pilot programs were in health care. The program is helping diversify the labor force in this field.

The program will serve a critical unmet need. The pilot had incredible retention, and it builds accountability into the design. Initial data show successful pilot projects meeting or exceeding expectations on many levels. It is important to ensure that all community and technical colleges and private career schools can offer the program.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Kenney, prime sponsor; Kim Justice, Statewide Poverty Action Network; Troy Hutson, Washington State Hospital Association; Madeleine Thompson, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Michael Itti, League of Education Voters; Chris Reykdal, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; John Walstrum, Clover Park Technical College; Jose Tenos, Edmonds Community College; and Amber Carter, Association of Washington Business.

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

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## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

**Majority Report:** The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Community & Economic Development & Trade. Signed by 34 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Dunshee, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Buri, Chandler, Cody, Conway, Darneille, Dunn, Ericks, Fromhold, Grant, Haigh, Hinkle, Hunt, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Kretz, Linville, McDermott, McDonald, McIntire, Morrell, Pettigrew, Priest, Schual-Berke, Seaquist, P. Sullivan and Walsh.

**Staff:** Debbie Driver (786-7143).

### **Background:**

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) The opportunity grants program addresses immediate needs of high demand employers as well as the financial needs of students interested in pursuing high demand fields of study. A recent state study found financial barriers are the number one barrier to attending higher education. The opportunity grant program lessens that barrier to students. Furthermore, the opportunity grants provide a way for businesses to increase diversity within the workforce. Funding in 2006 for opportunity grant pilot projects resulted in 10 currently operating pilot projects around the state. Preliminary results show 92 percent of students who began pilot programs in the fall of 2006 remain enrolled in winter 2007 and 52 percent are enrolled in healthcare pathways. Opportunity grants bring businesses, colleges, and students together to meet student's financial needs, create skilled employees, and respond to employer workforce gaps.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Tony Lee, Solid Ground; Pete Crow, Washington State Association of Plumbers and Pipe Fitters; Mike Hudson, Institute for Workforce Development and Economic Stability and Association of Washington Business; Brian Wilson, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Kevin McNellis, Whitman College State of the State for Washington Latinos; George Scarola, League of Education Voters; and Troy Hudson, Washington State Hospital Association.

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