

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1779

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

**Title:** An act relating to the GET ready for math and science scholarship program.

**Brief Description:** Creating the GET ready for math and science scholarship program.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Wallace, Dunn, Haigh, Kenney, Hasegawa, B. Sullivan, McDermott, Takko, Roberts, P. Sullivan, Fromhold, Quall, Simpson, Lantz, Hudgins, Kagi, Santos, Ormsby and Morrell.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Higher Education: 2/5/07, 2/15/07 [DPS].

### Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates the Guaranteed Education Tuition (GET) Ready for Math and Science Scholarship program, which will provide conditional scholarships to eligible undergraduate students who major in math, science, or a related field and agree to work in Washington in a math, science or related occupation for at least three years after graduation.

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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 8 members: Representatives Wallace, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Buri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hasegawa, Jarrett, McIntire, Roberts and Sommers.

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

#### **Background:**

##### Need for Degrees in Math and Science

The percentage of students majoring in math, science, and engineering has declined over at least the past decade, despite the fact that job opportunities in these fields continue to be strong. The state has recognized the need to increase the number of students majoring in

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math, science, and engineering. For example, the 2006 Supplemental Operating Budget provided about \$3.7 million for math and science enrollments at the University of Washington and Washington State University. The 2006 budget also included a \$500,000 appropriation to provide additional scholarships for students studying to become teachers in, among other fields, secondary math and science.

As part of the Washington Learns effort, the need for Washington's colleges and universities to produce more graduates in high demand fields, particularly mathematics and science, was acknowledged. The Washington Learns final report concluded that more students need to major in math and science. To provide incentives for students to do so, the Washington Learns report recommended creating scholarships to encourage low- and middle-income students who show an interest in math and science to major in those fields in college.

#### Guaranteed Education Tuition (GET) Program

Washington's Advanced College Tuition Payment Program—known as the GET Program—was created in 1998 as Washington's prepaid college tuition program. The GET Program allows purchasers to buy tuition units at current prices for use at a later date. These funds are invested by the State Investment Board and the purchaser is guaranteed that one year's worth of units purchased now will be worth one year's worth of public university tuition in the future.

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

The GET Ready for Math and Science Scholarship Program (Scholarship Program) is created. The Scholarship Program will provide college scholarships for students who:

- (1) score a "4" ("Advanced") on the 10th grade Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in either math or science;
- (2) have a family income no greater than 200 percent of the median family income in Washington at the time they apply for the scholarship and for up to the two previous years;
- (3) agree to major in a math, science, or related field; and
- (4) make a commitment to work for at least three years in Washington in a math, science, or related field.

The scholarships can be used at any public or private accredited college or university in Washington. However, the maximum annual scholarship amount cannot be more than the annual cost of undergraduate tuition and fees at the University of Washington. The amount of the scholarship will be based on the student's income level, with a maximum qualifying income of 200 percent of the state's median.

The Scholarship Program will be administered by a private non-profit organization. The non-profit organization and the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) will determine criteria for the undergraduate programs and majors offered in Washington in math, science, or a related field that qualify a student for a scholarship. The HECB will post the criteria for qualified courses and list these programs and majors on its website.

If a student receives a scholarship and then (1) does not graduate from college, (2) switches to a major not in math, science, or related field, or (3) does not work in a math, science or a related field in Washington for at least three years after graduation, the student will be required to pay back some or all of the scholarship funds received.

The HECB will buy tuition units from the state's Guaranteed Education Tuition Program (Washington's prepaid college tuition program) to be used for the GET Ready for Math and Science scholarships.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

- clarifies that the definition of institutions of higher education includes private colleges and universities in the state;
- adds the Children's Administration of the Department of Social and Health Services in the notification process about scholarship programs;
- provides the HECB with flexibility to respond to extenuating student circumstances;
- clarifies that the HECB and program administrator will develop criteria for identifying qualifying courses, programs and majors, rather than identifying the specific courses, programs and majors;
- changes the income ceiling for qualification from 125 percent of the median family income to 200 percent. Implements a scale for award amounts, so that students with incomes up to 100 percent of the median receive a full award, students with income levels between 100 and 150 percent of the median receive a 50 percent award, and students with incomes between 150 and 200 percent of the median receive a 25 percent award;
- requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to analyze data on the population benefitting from the scholarships; and
- requires that at least eight private partners work with the Scholarship Program administrator by providing input into the development and administration of the Scholarship Program.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available. New fiscal note requested on February 16, 2007.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) There is little question that there are needs for employees in science, mathematics, engineering and technology. This bill is designed to get students to be more interested in those fields. It will provide a powerful incentive and reward them for doing well on their WASL exam instead of taking a punitive approach.

This program is a state and private sector partnership that seeks to offer scholarships in math, science, engineering and technology for 1,000 students by purchasing guaranteed tuition packages for them. The goal is \$28 million with half from state funds and half from private funds. The dollar for dollar match is great, and it will send a message to lower and moderate income families. This is an exciting component of the Governor's math and science focus.

Suggestions to strengthen the bill are to allow the HECB to establish rules to reflect extenuating student circumstances, and for the HECB to develop criteria for courses as well as majors and programs that will that qualify.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Bob Craves and Susan Pollock, College Success Foundation; Debora Merle, Governor's office; Cindy Morana, Council of Presidents; and John Klacik, Higher Education Coordinating Board.

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