

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5155

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 5, 2007
Ways & Means, March 5, 2007

Title: An act relating to helping former foster care youth gain postsecondary education and providing scholarships to former foster care youth for this purpose.

Brief Description: Creating the passport to college promise program.

Sponsors: Senators Kilmer, Hargrove, Shin, Murray, Marr, Kauffman, Rockefeller, Kohl-Welles, Tom, Schoesler, Sheldon, Berkey, Delvin, McAuliffe, Keiser, Rasmussen and Franklin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 1/25/07, 2/05/07 [DPS-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/22/07, 3/05/07 [DP2S].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5155 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Shin, Chair; Kilmer, Vice Chair; Delvin, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Schoesler and Sheldon.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5155 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Operating Budget; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell, Fairley, Hatfield, Hewitt, Hobbs, Honeyford, Keiser, Kohl-Welles, Oemig, Parlette, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Tom.

Staff: Tim Yowell (786-7435)

Background: Various state agencies partner with the College Success Foundation and other nonprofit entities to create the Foster Care to College Partnership. This partnership

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coordinates its efforts to provide support services, information, and college scholarship aid to youth in permanent, state-supported foster care.

The 2005 Legislature created an endowed scholarship program for financially needy foster care youth and former foster care youth ages 16 to 23 years who had been in the state's foster care system six months or longer since turning 14 years of age. The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) publicizes and promotes the program to eligible students with the assistance of an advisory board. The amount of the award may not exceed the student's financial need.

In 2005, the duties of the Children's Administration Oversight Committee on Education of Foster Youth were expanded to include promotion of opportunities for foster youth to participate in postsecondary education or training. The HECB, when making awards of state need grants, was directed to give consideration to former foster youth.

In 2006, Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) was granted authority to allow up to 50 youth reaching 18 years of age to continue in foster care to participate in or complete a post-high school academic or vocational program and to receive necessary support and transition services. In 2007 and 2008, 50 additional youth per year may be permitted to continue to remain in foster or group care after reaching the age of 18 to complete post-high school academic or vocational programs.

Summary of Bill: The Passport to Promise Program is created. Eligible students are those that: (1) are between the ages of 16 and 26; (2) have been in foster care in Washington for at least six months since their 15th birthday; (3) are Washington residents; (4) are enrolled in an institution of higher education by the age of 21; (5) are making satisfactory academic progress; (6) have not earned a baccalaureate or professional degree; and (7) are not pursuing a degree in theology. Students must maintain a 2.0 grade point average or better.

Institutions of higher education are encouraged to recruit and assist current and former foster care youth with financial incentives. For 2008, the Office of Financial Management (OFM) allocates an appropriation between the HECB and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) based upon the historical enrollment in the two systems by former foster care youth between the ages of 16 and 26 between the years 2001 to 2006. After 2008, the allocations are based on the prior academic year's enrollments. HECB distributes \$3,500 to each institution for each eligible student who earns 45 quarter or 30 semester credits during that academic year. The institution receives an additional \$2,500 for each eligible student for every 45 quarter or 30 semester credits earned up to 180 quarter or 120 semester credits. Similarly, SBCTC distributes equal amounts up to the time the student has earned 90 quarter or 60 semester credits. In addition, SBCTC makes one or more awards totaling \$25,000 annually to institutions of higher education that have been the most successful in recruiting, retaining, and graduating eligible students.

Institutions are to award supplemental scholarships to eligible students. The supplemental scholarship equals the eligible student's total cost of attendance, less all other grant and scholarship financial aid that the student receives. The supplemental scholarship may not exceed the lesser of: (1) the cost of attendance at the institution plus 50 percent of the cost of on-campus room and board; or (2) the resident undergraduate cost of full-time attendance at the University of Washington plus 50 percent of the cost of on-campus room and board. The

student may receive the awards for a maximum of five years or until the student reaches the age of 26, whichever occurs first.

SBCTC develops and maintains a web-site and outreach program with information regarding higher education application processes and financial aid. DSHS contracts with a non-governmental agency to develop and administer a program of educational transition planning for youth in foster care. HECB and SBCTC report results of the program to the Legislature by January 2010.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Higher Education): The 50 percent cost of living enhancement is replaced with language allowing reasonable additional expenses approved by the financial aid administrator. It is clarified that this scholarship is meant to supplement other sources of aid. The student has the option of including work-study funds in the financial aid package. Instead of requiring a minimum 2.0 GPA, students remain eligible as long as they meet the satisfactory academic progress requirements of the school.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SECOND SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Ways & Means): The proposed second substitute does not include the finding that the state has the same responsibility as a non-custodial parent to a youth who has been in foster care during his or her adolescence. The program is subject to appropriation, rather than an entitlement. The program is a six-year pilot scheduled to expire June 30, 2013, after an outcomes evaluation by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy. Students eligible for scholarships and student support services are those who emancipate from foster care at age 18, after having spent at least one year in care after their 16th birthday. The maximum annual supplemental scholarship amount is equal to tuition and fees at the highest-priced state college or university. The Department of Social and Health Services is to establish procedures for helping the higher education coordinating board and institutions of higher education identify students who are eligible for assistance under the program. The Higher Education Coordinating Board, rather than the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, is responsible for developing a foster youth-specific website on college admission and financial aid processes, timelines, and resources.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Higher Education): PRO: This bill opens the door for a group who have not had equitable opportunities to obtain post-secondary education. Only 2 percent of former foster youth in the United States graduate from college. Over twice as many go to prison. This bill contains authority, services, and accountability. These youths face many obstacles. We should remove this one. The bill sends the message that Washington values post-secondary education for all. This gives the institutions the resources to provide the services required to retain students.

Persons Testifying (Higher Education): PRO: Senator Kilmer, prime sponsor; Brigid McDevitt and Joan M. Ray, Seattle Central Community College; Reuven Carlyle, State Board

of Community and Technical Colleges; Chereese Phillips, Treehouse and Passion to Action; Terry Teale, Council of Presidents; Rob Crecile, Treehouse; Daniel Stusser, former foster parent.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: This bill is necessary because a child who has spent time in foster care is more than twice as likely to end up in prison as in college. The goal of the legislation is to "cast a broad net," because so few former foster care children presently make it to college. National research suggests that at most 10-20 percent of foster care kids go on to college. It is important to take a comprehensive approach, which doesn't just provide foster kids the direct financial aid they need to go to college, but also gives colleges and universities incentives and resources to help those kids succeed in college once they get there.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Senator Kilmer, prime sponsor; Reuven Carlyle, State Board for Community & Technical Colleges; Janis Avery, Treehouse for Kids.