SENATE BILL REPORT
SB 5175

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education & Workforce Development, February 13, 2009

Title: An act relating to the Washington promise scholarship program.

Brief Description: Changing the Washington college promise scholarship program.

Sponsors: Senators Shin, Fairley, Kastama, Jarrett, Rockefeller, Hobbs, Delvin and Hatfield.

Brief History:
  Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/28/09, 2/13/09 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.
    Signed by Senators Kilmer, Chair; Jarrett, Vice Chair; Becker, Ranking Minority Member; Jacobsen, Kastama, McAuliffe, Pflug, Shin and Stevens.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: The Washington Promise Scholarship was first established in the 1997 budget to provide college scholarships to the state's top high school seniors from low- and middle-income families. The Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) administered the program, with the assistance of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The award consisted of two years tuition at the community college full-time tuition rate.

In 2002 the Washington Promise Scholarship Program was created in statute. Each qualifying student received two consecutive annual awards, the value of each not to exceed the full-time annual resident tuition rates charged by Washington's community colleges. The scholarships could only be used for undergraduate course work at accredited institutions of higher education in Washington, or for undergraduate course work at Oregon institutions that were part of the border county opportunity program. The scholarships could be used for college-related expenses, including tuition, room and board, books, and materials.

To be eligible, a student was required to graduate in the top 15 percent of that student's graduating class, have a Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) score of equal to or exceeding a

cumulative 1200 on the first attempt, or a American College Test (ACT) score equal to or exceeding 27 on the first attempt. The student's family income could not exceed 135 percent of the state median family income adjusted for family size, as determined by the HECB. Students not meeting the financial eligibility requirements for the first year of scholarship benefits could reapply for the second year of benefits.

The HECB administered the scholarship, with the assistance of the OSPI. The first scholarships were awarded in 2002-03. The Washington Promise Scholarship Program still exists in statute, but has not been funded since June 30, 2006.

Summary of Bill: The eligibility requirements are modified. Students must be "resident students." A graduate from a public or private school must be in the top 10 percent of the class instead of the top 15 percent. Home schooled students or those who have a GED are required to score above the ninetieth percentile on the SAT or ACT.

Students may receive up to two consecutive annual awards not to exceed the full-time annual tuition fees charged at the University of Washington instead of the rates charged at Washington community colleges. The first scholarships are awarded after 2009 for the 1010-11 academic year.

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: PRO: Sholarships that combine academic and need-based requirements are designed to inspire students to achieve. This is an essential part of Washington's model of giving aid based primarily on need, but also encouraging scholarship. This is a worthwhile scholarship that should receive funding.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Shin, prime sponsor; Matthew Holmes, Washington Student Lobby.