

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1608

As of March 14, 2011

Title: An act relating to modifying the opportunity internship program.

Brief Description: Modifying the opportunity internship program.

Sponsors: House Committee on Labor & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Representatives Billig, Probst, Haigh, Santos, Seaquist, Anderson, Haler, Maxwell, Dammeier, Sells, Carlyle, Sullivan, Ladenburg, Dahlquist, Frockt, Fitzgibbon, Ryu, Orwall, Moscoso, Stanford, Jinkins, Ormsby, Jacks, McCoy, Appleton, Kelley, Van De Wege, Clibborn, Kenney, Roberts, Upthegrove, Goodman, Hasegawa and Tharinger).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/26/11, 82-14.

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 3/11/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: Opportunity Internship Program. Created in 2009, the Opportunity Internship Program (Program) provides incentives for consortia of businesses to use existing resources to train low-income high school students for high-demand occupations in targeted industries. To be eligible for the Program, students must be enrolled in grade 10, 11, or 12 at public high schools and qualify for federal free- or reduced-price meals. Students in families with incomes of less than 130 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for free meals; those with incomes up to 185 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals. Students may remain eligible for the Program even if they later no longer receive free- or reduced-price meals, but students must remain enrolled in high school until they receive a diploma.

The Program offers the following incentives for students: each graduate is eligible for as much as one year of financial assistance for post-secondary education through the State Need Grant and each graduate who completes a post-secondary program receives a job interview with an employer participating in a consortium. A consortium may receive as much as \$2,000 per graduate who completes a post-secondary program of study, obtains a job in a high-demand occupation paying at least \$30,000 annually, and remains employed for at least

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six months. The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) administers the Program.

State Need Grant. The State Need Grant Program provides financial aid to low-income undergraduate students attending public two- and four-year colleges and universities and certain accredited independent colleges, universities, and career schools in Washington. To be eligible, students must submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), have a family income of less than 70 percent of the state median, be a Washington resident enrolled at an eligible institution, and meet other qualifications.

Title I-B Youth Program. The federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1988 established a program to prepare low-income youth for academic and employment success, by offering counseling, tutoring, job training, mentoring, or work experience. To be eligible for WIA Title I-B Youth Program services, an individual must be 14 to 21 years old and meet other criteria, such as being a school dropout, a foster child, pregnant, or homeless.

Summary of Bill: Low-income public high school students in 10th, 11th, or 12th grade are eligible for the Program when they qualify for a State Need Grant or qualify to participate in the WIA Title I-B Youth Program. An Opportunity Internship graduate is a low-income high school student who successfully completes the Program and either graduates from high school or receives a general education diploma (GED). Other references to a high school diploma are amended to include the receipt of a GED.

For purposes of the Program, a high-demand occupation can also include teaching of mathematics, science, bilingual education, special education, or English as a second language. Program consortia may include partnerships of high schools, teacher preparation programs, and community-based organizations offering the Recruiting Washington Teachers Program. Consortia are encouraged to provide stipends or financial incentives for internship and pre-apprenticeship completion.

The definition of needy student for the purpose of qualifying for a State Need Grant is expanded to include pre-apprenticeship graduates who enroll in postsecondary programs of study within one year of high school graduation or receipt of a GED.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) must create certificates notifying internship and pre-apprenticeship graduates that they are eligible for State Need Grants and that it is important to file the FAFSA early to secure eligibility. The HECB must provide the certificates to Opportunity Internship consortia, which must award each graduate with a certificate.

The Workforce Board must include in its December 1, 2014, report to the Legislature whether the performance of the Program warrants expanding participation to include students from middle-income families who do not currently meet the income eligibility criteria.

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: The bill makes minor adjustments to an already successful dropout prevention program and gets students in line for State Need Grants. We want to make sure the Program is truly targeted at low-income students. HECB is the fiscal agent for activities. The switch from income standards will facilitate administration and get more eligible students into the Program. As a student, the Program provided me with the motivation to continue education beyond high school and pursue a career, helped me find an immediate job opportunity, and enabled me to have an internship to experience my career choice before leaving high school. The \$500 upon completion helps students in a variety of ways, including securing a place to live. A recent study shows unemployed adult youth is much higher than it should be. Thus, we are looking for any opportunity for students to get additional work experience and move beyond high school. The program provides students with work experience – which employers say students really need – and motivation to continue higher education.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Billig, prime sponsor; Chris Thompson, HECB; Alyssa Dawkins, Krishan Golden, Jessica Manuer, Vedad Pezer, students; Wes Pruitt, Workforce Board.