

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## ESHB 1236

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

**Title:** An act relating to eliminating the parent or guardian approval requirement for the college bound scholarship pledge.

**Brief Description:** Concerning witnessing a student's college bound scholarship pledge when efforts to obtain a parent's or guardian's signature are unsuccessful.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Ortiz-Self, Johnson, Santos, Lytton, Moscoso, Pettigrew, Walkinshaw, Kilduff, Sawyer, Reykdal, Bergquist, Fey, Tarleton and Hudgins).

#### **Brief History:**

##### **Committee Activity:**

Higher Education: 1/21/15, 2/3/15, 2/4/15 [DPS], 1/19/16, 2/3/16 [DP2S].

#### **Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill**

- Adds that a student's parents or guardians, in addition to the student, must be notified of the student's eligibility for the College Bound Scholarship (CBS) Program and the requirements for award of the scholarship.
- Allows a school administrator or counselor to witness a student's CBS pledge if after multiple attempts by the Office of Student Financial Assistance (Office) and the school counselor or administrator to secure the signature of the student's parent or guardian, the student's parent's or guardian's signature is still not obtained.
- Requires the school counselor or administrator to indicate to the Office the nature of the unsuccessful attempts to contact the student's parent or guardian and the reasons the signature was not obtained.
- Prohibits a school counselor or administrator from witnessing a student's CBS pledge if the student's parent or guardian indicated that he or she did not want the student to participate in the CBS program.
- Corrects Higher Education Coordinating Board references to the Office.

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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.*

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## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Zeiger, Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Frame, Reykdal, Sells, Stambaugh and Tarleton.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Hargrove, Holy and Van Werven.

**Staff:** Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

### **Background:**

#### College Bound Scholarship Program.

The College Board Scholarship (CBS) Program was established in 2007 to provide guaranteed four-year tuition to students from low-income families. The first CBS awards were granted to the graduating high school class of 2012. Eligible students for the CBS include those who:

- qualify for free or reduced-price lunches in the seventh grade; or
- are dependent from parents or guardians, or are receiving extended foster care services; and
- are in grades 7 through 12; or
- are between the ages of 18 and 21 years and have not graduated from high school.

Beginning in the seventh grade, eligible students are notified of their eligibility and the requirements for award of the scholarship. To be eligible to receive the CBS, a student must sign a pledge during the seventh or eighth grade that includes a commitment to graduate from high school with at least a C average and no felony convictions. The pledge must be witnessed by a parent or guardian and forwarded to the Office of Student Financial Assistance (Office). If the student is a dependent, the student is automatically enrolled without any necessary action by the student or the student's family.

To receive the CBS, the student must graduate with at least a C average from a public high school, approved private high school, or have received home-based instruction. The student cannot have a felony conviction and must be a resident student. Upon graduation, the student's family income will be assessed, and if it does not exceed 65 percent of the state median family income, the student will receive a scholarship.

The CBS recipients that attend public two-year or four-year institutions of higher education receive an award to cover the cost of tuition and fees, minus any state-funded grant, scholarship, or waiver assistance, plus \$500 for books and materials. The student must maintain satisfactory academic progress and may not receive the scholarship for more than four full-time years.

#### The Office of Student Financial Assistance.

On July 1, 2012, the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) was abolished and the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) was created in its place. Within the

WSAC is the Office, which is in charge of administering the College Bound Scholarship (CBS) Program, which includes developing and distributing pledge forms, implementing the application and selection process, and tracking scholarship recipients. The Office also purchases tuition units under the Advanced College Tuition Payment Program, also known as the Guaranteed Education Tuition (GET) Program, for the purpose of the CBS awards. The Office distributes scholarship funds to the institutions of higher education on behalf of the recipients.

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**Summary of Second Substitute Bill:**

The eligible student's parents or guardians must be notified of the student's eligibility for the CBS and the requirements for award of the scholarship. Beginning in the 2016-17 academic year, the Office is required to make multiple attempts to secure the signature of the student's parent or guardian for the purpose of witnessing the student's pledge. If the Office is unable to obtain the signature of the student's parent or guardian, the Office may partner with the school counselor or administrator to secure the parent's or guardian's signature. The school counselor or administrator must make multiple attempts via all telephone numbers, email addresses, and mailing addresses on record to secure the parent's or guardian's signature. If the parent's or guardian's signature is still not obtained, the school counselor or administrator must indicate to the Office the nature of the unsuccessful attempts to contact the student's parent or guardian and the reasons the signature is not available. Then the school counselor or administrator may witness the student's CBS pledge unless the parent or guardian has indicated that they do not wish for the student to participate in the program.

All references to the HECB are changed to the Office of Student Financial Assistance.

**Second Substitute Bill Compared to Engrossed Substitute Bill:**

The substitute bill changes the date to reflect the upcoming 2016-17 academic year, and requires the school counselor or administrator to make multiple attempts via all phone numbers, email addresses, and mailing addresses on record to secure a parent's or guardian's signature. In addition, before a school counselor or administrator may witness a CBS pledge, the reasons the signature was not obtained need to be indicated to the Office. If a parent or guardian indicates that they do not want the student to participate in the CBS program, the school counselor or administrator may not witness the pledge.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Counselors want to ensure that every child who qualifies for the CBS gets it. This process starts in the seventh grade when letters are sent home to the parents from the school and the Council. Parents are also called. There has been an increased sign-up rate of 91 percent, but there are still 3,400 students who did not pledge. For numerous reasons, about 15 percent of students in some districts still do not return pledge forms. Many of those students are the most vulnerable, such as homeless, foster, or undocumented students. This bill provides a simple fix. After the WSAC and school administrator or counselor document all of the unsuccessful attempts, it allows the counselor or administrator to sign on behalf of the parent. There is still every effort to engage with parents, but many of these vulnerable students find out they are not eligible in high school because they did not obtain a parent's signature. This can be avoided.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Ortiz-Self, prime sponsor; Rachele Sharpe, Washington Student Achievement Council; and Kim Reykdal, Washington School Counselor Association.

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