

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1236

As of March 26, 2015

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: Passed House: 3/04/15, 74-24.

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 3/24/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: In 2007 the Legislature created the College Bound Scholarship (CBS) Program to provide a tuition scholarship program for low-income students. The scholarship is open to seventh and eighth graders who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches and sign a pledge to graduate from high school with a 2.0 grade point average or higher and no felony convictions. The pledge must be witnessed by a parent or guardian. Students in foster care are automatically enrolled. At the time of high school graduation, eligible students must have a family income of 65 percent of the state median family income or below.

The CBS award amounts are calculated as the difference between public institution tuition and required fees, less the value of any state-funded grant, scholarship, or waiver assistance the student receives, plus \$500 for books. All scholarship recipients are limited to no more than four full-time years' worth of scholarship awards and the scholarship award must be used within five years of receipt.

The Office of Student Financial Aid (Office), within the Washington Student Achievement Council, is the administrator of the Program. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction must notify elementary, middle, and junior high schools about the Program and to work with the Washington Student Achievement Council to develop application collection and student tracking procedures.

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.

Summary of Bill: Students eligible for the CBS program, as well as their parents or guardians, must be notified of the student's eligibility and of the requirements for the scholarship award at the beginning of seventh grade.

Beginning in the 2015-16 academic year, the Office must make multiple attempts to secure the signature of the student's parent or guardian for the witnessing the pledge. If the signature of the student's parent or guardian is not obtained, the Office may partner with the school counselor or administrator to secure the signature. If the signature is still not obtained, the school counselor or administrator may witness the pledge and indicate to the Office the nature of the unsuccessful efforts to contact the student's parent or guardian.

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: Students may qualify for CBS but not get a parent signature. The students are often the ones that need the CBS program most. The students may be living with aunts and uncles or are homeless. This bill eliminates the possibility of a student being eliminated because the parent did not sign within the window of time. Parents will have to sign the Free Application for Federal Student Aid when the student is in twelfth grade. It is important to notify students and families. The bill would strengthen the process in the rare cases where a parent signature is not available, while prioritizing the involvement of parents.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Ortiz-Self, prime sponsor; Rachelle Sharpe, WA Student Achievement Council.

Persons Signed in to Testify But Not Testifying: No one.