

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5318

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 12, 2015

Title: An act relating to creating the wildlife college student loan program.

Brief Description: Creating the wildlife college student loan program.

Sponsors: Senators Parlette, Bailey and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/10/15, 2/12/15 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chair; Baumgartner, Vice Chair; Kohl-Welles, Ranking Minority Member; Becker, Frockt and Liias.

Staff: Evan Klein (786-7483)

Background: The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC). WSAC was created in 2012 to provide strategic planning, oversight, advocacy, and programs to support increased student success and higher levels of educational attainment in Washington. WSAC administers a number of financial aid programs, including an aerospace loan program, a health professional loan forgiveness and scholarship program, and the John R. Justice loan forgiveness program for eligible Washington attorneys.

Wildlife Science Programs. The institutions of higher education in Washington state offer various wildlife sciences courses, programs, and degree tracks. Wildlife sciences programs vary in their scope, but may include studies of conservation, biology, ecology, plant sciences, and ecosystem management. Coursework in these programs generally includes lecture classes as well as hands-on lab courses.

Summary of Bill: A wildlife college student loan program (WCSL) is established.

Students eligible for a WCSL loan are those Washington resident students who are registered and enrolled in a wildlife science or related science program as a major course of study at an

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institution of higher education, are making satisfactory progress defined by the institution, and declared intention to work in the wildlife science industry.

WSAC must administer the WCSL. WSAC must:

- screen and select eligible students;
- issue student loan awards;
- issue low-interest student loans;
- establish an annual load limit;
- define the terms of repayment;
- collect and manage repayments;
- solicit and accept grants and donations from public and private sources; and
- monitor and ensure compliance with the matching requirements.

WSAC may make an award to match a public or private grant or donation. The maximum annual state contribution cannot exceed \$100,000 unless specifically authorized in the state budget. Loan awards may not exceed the cost of tuition and fees for the students' program of study.

A WCSL match account is created in the custody of the State Treasurer as a nonappropriated account to be used solely and exclusively for WCSL. WSAC must deposit all monies received for WCSL into the account. No expenditures may be made from the account without matching funds.

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: This bill idea was brought by a constituent who has money set aside to contribute to this program. The constituent wants the recognition for students who care about wildlife and wants to allow them to utilize this program. This program would incentivize students to enter wildlife programs across the state, in line with STEM goals. This program could be a lasting program that goes on forever. WSAC administers other loan programs and would be delighted to administer this program as well.

OTHER: Students at Evergreen don't have majors, but have a course of study. Evergreen wants to ensure that their students would be eligible for this program.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Parlette, prime sponsor; Gene Sharratt, WSAC.

OTHER: Julie Garver, The Evergreen State College.