

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5328

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 3, 2015

Title: An act relating to disseminating financial aid information.

Brief Description: Disseminating financial aid information.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Bailey and Chase.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 1/29/15, 2/03/15 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5328 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: The State Need Grant (SNG) program assists needy and disadvantaged students by offsetting a portion of their higher education costs. To be eligible, a student's family income cannot exceed 70 percent of the state's median family income, currently \$58,500 for a family of four. Approximately 70,000 low-income recipients received SNG funds during the 2013-14 academic year. However, 33,500 students were unserved for one or more terms. The Legislature provided the SNG program \$308 million for 2014-15.

In 2014 the Legislature passed SB 6358, requiring the community and technical colleges to provide financial aid application due dates and information on whether or not financial aid will be awarded on a rolling basis to admitted students at the time of their acceptance. The Legislature encouraged institutions of higher education to post financial aid application dates and distribution policies on their websites.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): Public four-year institutions of higher education must provide financial aid application due dates and information in written or electronic form for prospective and admitted students.

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.

All institutions of higher education eligible to participate in the SNG program are encouraged to post financial aid applications dates and distribution policies on their websites.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Clarifies that financial aid application due dates and information must be in written or electronic form for prospective and admitted students, rather than limited to student letters of admission.

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 on Original Bill: PRO: The Legislature passed a similar bill last year on financial aid due dates but even more important is how the institutions award the aid to the students. The bill provides more transparency for students and parents about how rolling awards are made. Eastern Washington University provides information on its website that financial aid funds might run out. Washington State University doesn't provide direct information but has a countdown timer for financial aid. The University of Washington and Central Washington University don't have specific information but have priority deadlines. We want individual students to know that when they apply to college they should also get their information for financial aid in on time. The inference that late filers don't care or need the aid is not appropriate. We have a minor amendment for fixing timing issues. We want to make sure that students that apply after financial aid deadlines still have access to information.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor; Becca Kenna-Schenk, Council of Presidents.