

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5638

As Passed Senate, March 5, 2015

Title: An act relating to state need grant eligibility.

Brief Description: Changing state need grant eligibility provisions.

Sponsors: Senators Hasegawa, Roach, Kohl-Welles, Chase, Keiser and McAuliffe.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/19/15 [DP-WM, w/oRec].

Passed Senate: 3/05/15, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

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

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Becker.

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: The State Need Grant (SNG) program was established in 1969 to support low-income students and offset the increase of tuition. In 2014-15, 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. Awards are prorated by income categories and further prorated for part-time students: 75 percent for students taking nine to eleven credits, 50 percent for students taking six to eight credits, and 25 percent for students taking three to five credits.

In 1990 the Legislature extended SNG eligibility to students enrolled at least half-time – six quarter credits or more. In 2005 the Legislature directed the former Higher Education Coordinating Board to develop a two-year pilot project to assess the need for and feasibility of allowing students enrolled for at least four quarter credits to be eligible for SNG. Under the pilot, students attending a participating school who enrolled for four or five credits were eligible to receive a grant as long as they met the other eligibility criteria for SNG. In 2007 the Legislature extended the part-time student pilot program to students enrolled for at least

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three quarter credits, or the semester equivalent. The pilot program expired on June 30, 2011.

Under the 2013-15 operating budget, eligibility for SNG includes students enrolled in three to five quarter credits.

Summary of Bill: Students who are enrolled or accepted for enrollment for at least three quarter credits, or the equivalent semester hours, in a qualifying higher education program are eligible for SNG.

The expired pilot program allowing less-than-half-time students to be eligible for the SNG program is removed from statute.

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 allows students to drop down to three credits. Most recipients are nontraditional students, single parents, or working, and trying to get a better education. Often life gets in the way and students have to take fewer credits. Over 80 percent of recipients only stay at less than half time one quarter and then return to full time. This has been implemented through budget provisos but it is time to put it in statute.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Hasegawa, prime sponsor; Scott Copeland, WA State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Rachelle Sharpe, WA Student Achievement Council; Eric Wolf, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.