

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6512

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As of February 11, 2016

**Title:** An act relating to requiring that a percentage of state need grant recipients be pursuing degrees in STEM subjects.

**Brief Description:** Requiring that a certain percentage of state need grant recipients be pursuing degrees in STEM subjects.

**Sponsors:** Senators Baumgartner and Conway.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education: 2/02/16.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Staff:** Clint McCarthy (786-7319)

**Background:** The State Need Grant (SNG) program helps the state's lowest-income undergraduate students pursue degrees, hone skills, or retrain for new careers. Students can use the grants at eligible institutions in Washington. \$303 million in SNG funding enabled over 70,100 low-income resident students to pursue a degree or credential in 2013-14. According to the 2014 State Need Grant Report published by the Washington Student Achievement Council, the program was unable to serve more than 33,500 eligible students due to insufficient funds. SNG coordinates with other aid: 95 percent of students receive a Pell Grant, 40 percent receive institutional or scholarship aid, and 50 percent borrow student loans. Currently, 68 higher education institutions participate in SNG.

College and university degree programs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) are considered STEM degrees. Under existing statute, there is no requirement that requires any percentage of students receiving SNG to pursue a STEM degree.

**Summary of Bill:** Beginning in the 2016-17 academic year, at least 25 percent of SNG funding is required to fund awards for students pursuing degrees in STEM subjects. The Office of Financial Assistance is required to report annually on the percentage of students receiving SNG funding that are pursuing degrees in STEM subjects.

**Appropriation:** None.

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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.*

**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: We need to get more students into higher valued degrees. STEM degrees lead to high paying jobs.

CON: This bill would put a moratorium on participating education coursework that is not STEM related.

OTHER: This might add to the underserved by putting a target percentage into statute. We want students to be able to choose what they want to do, rather than be forced into a STEM program. State Need Grant is in statute to assist financially needy students, and does not focus on the degree that they are pursuing.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Baumgartner, prime sponsor.

CON: Josh MacKintosh, Student at UW Seattle.

OTHER: Scott Copeland, State Board for Community & Technical Colleges; Becca Kenna-Schenk, Western Washington University; Juliette Schindler Kelly, College Success Foundation.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.