

---

HOUSE BILL 2593

---

State of Washington

64th Legislature

2016 Regular Session

By Representatives Kilduff, Zeiger, Moscoso, Bergquist, Rossetti, McBride, Stanford, S. Hunt, Gregerson, Santos, Goodman, Pollet, and Hickel

Read first time 01/15/16. Referred to Committee on Higher Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to making community and technical colleges more  
2 affordable by eliminating the application fee for low-income students  
3 and reviewing placement testing fees; adding a new section to chapter  
4 28B.50 RCW; creating new sections; and providing an expiration date.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds:

7 (a) Washington's community and technical college system plays an  
8 essential role in the state's higher education program;

9 (b) Washington's community and technical college system strives  
10 to provide affordable access to higher education for students  
11 statewide, and one of the stated purposes of the community and  
12 technical college system is to offer an open door to every citizen,  
13 regardless of his or her academic background or experience, at a cost  
14 normally within his or her economic means;

15 (c) According to the Washington student achievement council, in  
16 the 2013-14 academic year, tuition at the state's community and  
17 technical colleges' was eight and four-tenths percent higher than the  
18 national average, and Washington ranked sixteenth highest among the  
19 fifty states in the cost of community college tuition;

20 (d) Although the legislature reduced tuition for higher education  
21 in 2015, the overall cost of attending college is still a barrier for

1 many students. According to a 2014 report from the Washington state  
2 education data center, the average loan amount for students attending  
3 community and technical colleges was approximately six thousand  
4 dollars per year, which is significant for low-income students.

5 (2) The legislature therefore declares that affordability issues  
6 and perceived barriers to affordability can be reduced by waiving the  
7 application fee in the community and technical college system for  
8 low-income students.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.50  
10 RCW to read as follows:

11 (1) The college board shall coordinate with the community and  
12 technical colleges to implement a uniform statewide program to waive  
13 the application fee for any individual applying for admission to a  
14 community or technical college who:

15 (a) Is a resident student, as defined in RCW 28B.15.012; and

16 (b) Whose income, at the time the individual is applying for  
17 admission to a community or technical college, is at or below seventy  
18 percent of the state median family income adjusted for family size.

19 (2) "Application fee" means the processing fee the community or  
20 technical college requires an individual to pay when submitting an  
21 application for admission. "Application fee" does not include  
22 placement testing fees.

23 (3) The uniform application fee waiver program must be in effect  
24 at all community and technical colleges by the time the community and  
25 technical colleges begin accepting applications for admission for the  
26 fall 2017 term.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1)(a) The state board for community and  
28 technical colleges shall coordinate with the community and technical  
29 colleges to determine the amount of forgone revenue each college  
30 experienced for the 2017-18 academic year as a result of implementing  
31 the application fee waiver program established in section 2 of this  
32 act.

33 (b) To better assess the use, effectiveness, and costs of  
34 placement tests given to entering students, the state board for  
35 community and technical colleges shall review the operation and  
36 impact of placement testing administered at the community and  
37 technical colleges.

1 (2) By December 1, 2018, the state board for community and  
2 technical colleges must submit a report to the governor and the  
3 higher education and fiscal committees of the legislature.

4 (a) Regarding the application fee waiver program, the report must  
5 include, at a minimum:

6 (i) Information on the fiscal impact the waiver program has had  
7 on the colleges for the 2017-18 academic year;

8 (ii) An estimate of the annual revenue the colleges expect to  
9 forgo as a result of the application fee waiver program; and

10 (iii) A recommendation on the feasibility of community and  
11 technical colleges to offset any reduction in revenue from the waiver  
12 program by implementing a tiered application fee structure for  
13 students with incomes above seventy percent of median family income  
14 adjusted for family size.

15 (b) For the purposes of assessing the operation and impact of  
16 placement testing, the report must include, at a minimum:

17 (i) The number of placement tests taken by entering students;

18 (ii) A description of how, and to what extent, the community and  
19 technical colleges use placement tests in determining students'  
20 academic skill levels;

21 (iii) The costs to the community and technical colleges of  
22 administering placement tests and analyzing test results;

23 (iv) The costs to students for taking placement tests;

24 (v) The number and percentage of students who have matriculated  
25 in the previous four years along with the number of and percentage of  
26 matriculating students who have taken placement tests; and

27 (vi) Recommendations on how to eliminate or minimize the cost of  
28 placement tests to low-income students.

29 (3) This section expires August 1, 2019.

--- END ---