
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2955

State of Washington 64th Legislature 2016 Regular Session

By House Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Hansen, Stanford, Ormsby, Frame, and Haler)

READ FIRST TIME 02/05/16.

1 AN ACT Relating to creating the Washington free to finish college
2 program; amending RCW 28B.76.540; adding a new chapter to Title 28B
3 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an expiration date.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that the cost of
6 higher education is often a barrier for students and recognizes that
7 in order to meet the legislature's educational attainment goal of
8 having at least seventy percent of Washington adults obtain a
9 postsecondary credential by 2023, more needs to be done to encourage
10 Washingtonians to go back to college. Therefore, it is the intent of
11 the legislature to make college free for any resident who attended a
12 postsecondary education degree or certificate program and left with
13 fifteen quarter or semester credits left or less and has not been
14 enrolled in a public institution of higher education the past three
15 years prior, to return to complete his or her degree or certificate
16 program.

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The definitions in this section apply
18 throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires
19 otherwise.

1 (1) "Gift aid" means financial aid received from the federal Pell
2 grant, the state need grant program under chapter 28B.92 RCW, the
3 college bound scholarship program under chapter 28B.118 RCW, the
4 opportunity grant program under chapter 28B.50 RCW, the opportunity
5 scholarship program under chapter 28B.145 RCW, or any other state
6 grant or scholarship program that provides funds for educational
7 purposes with no obligation of repayment. Student loans and work
8 study programs are not "gift aid."

9 (2) "Office" means the office of student financial assistance, as
10 established under chapter 28B.76 RCW.

11 (3) "Program" means the Washington free to finish college program
12 created in this chapter.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) The Washington free to finish college
14 program is established to encourage Washington residents who attended
15 a postsecondary education degree or certificate program, but were
16 unable to graduate and are no longer enrolled in a postsecondary
17 education degree or certificate program, to return to an institution
18 of higher education to complete their program of study. To be
19 eligible for the program, a student needs to:

20 (a) Be a resident of the state, as defined in RCW 28B.15.012(2)
21 (a) through (e);

22 (b) Not previously earned a postsecondary degree or certificate;

23 (c) Be enrolled in an institution of higher education, but not
24 enrolled for the past three years prior to the first quarter or
25 semester of reenrollment under the program;

26 (d) Have no more than fifteen quarter credits or fifteen semester
27 credits remaining in his or her degree or certificate program; and

28 (e) Submit the free application for federal student aid (FAFSA)
29 or the Washington application for state financial aid.

30 (2) The program shall be administered by the office, which may
31 adopt rules necessary to administer the program.

32 (3) Subject to the availability of funding, the office shall
33 award grants to students who meet the criteria in subsection (1) of
34 this section for an amount equal to the cost of tuition and fees as
35 defined in RCW 28B.15.020 and services and activities fees as defined
36 in RCW 28B.15.041, less any gift aid received.

37 (4) The program shall not result in a reduction of any federal or
38 state gift aid.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** By December 1, 2017, and every December
2 1st thereafter, the office shall report to the appropriate policy and
3 fiscal committees of the legislature regarding the impact of the
4 program, including:

- 5 (1) The number of applicants;
- 6 (2) The number of students served;
- 7 (3) Program costs;
- 8 (4) Participant demographics;
- 9 (5) Enrollment status, meaning part time versus full time;
- 10 (6) Field of study; and
- 11 (7) Any other information deemed relevant.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** (1) The office shall contract with a third
13 party to complete an evaluation of the program. The evaluation must
14 address the impacts and cost of the program, and it must include an
15 assessment of student support services provided to students who
16 qualify for the program, including whether the student support
17 services are considered effective at helping students succeed at
18 college. A report on the evaluation is due to the appropriate policy
19 and fiscal committees of the legislature by November 1, 2020.

- 20 (2) This section expires August 1, 2021.

21 **Sec. 6.** RCW 28B.76.540 and 2011 1st sp.s. c 11 s 111 are each
22 amended to read as follows:

23 In addition to administrative responsibilities assigned in this
24 chapter, the office shall administer the programs set forth in the
25 following statutes: RCW 28A.600.100 through 28A.600.150 (Washington
26 scholars); chapter 28B.85 RCW (degree-granting institutions); chapter
27 28B.92 RCW (state need grant); chapter 28B.12 RCW (work-study); RCW
28 28B.15.543 (tuition waivers for Washington scholars); RCW 28B.15.760
29 through 28B.15.766 (math and science loans); RCW 28B.15.100
30 (reciprocity agreement); RCW 28B.15.730 through 28B.15.734 (Oregon
31 reciprocity); RCW 28B.15.750 and 28B.15.752 (Idaho reciprocity); RCW
32 28B.15.756 (British Columbia reciprocity); chapter 28B.101 RCW
33 (educational opportunity grant); chapter 28B.102 RCW (future teachers
34 conditional scholarship); chapter 28B.108 RCW (American Indian
35 endowed scholarship); chapter 28B.109 RCW (Washington international
36 exchange scholarship); chapter 28B.115 RCW (health professional
37 conditional scholarship); chapter 28B.119 RCW (Washington promise
38 scholarship); chapter 28B.--- RCW (the new chapter created in section

1 7 of this act)(Washington free to finish college program); and
2 chapter 28B.133 RCW (gaining independence for students with
3 dependents).

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** Sections 1 through 5 of this act
5 constitute a new chapter in Title 28B RCW.

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** If specific funding for the purposes of
7 this act, referencing this act by bill or chapter number, is not
8 provided by June 30, 2016, in the omnibus appropriations act, this
9 act is null and void.

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