

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1293

As Reported by House Committee On: Higher Education

Title: An act relating to eliminating the parent or guardian approval requirement for the college bound scholarship pledge.

Brief Description: Concerning witnessing a student's college bound scholarship pledge when efforts to obtain a parent's or guardian's signature are unsuccessful.

Sponsors: Representatives Ortiz-Self, Caldier, Stonier, Doglio, Orwall, Senn, Tarleton, McBride, Gregerson, Kagi, Jinkins, Santos, Pollet, Bergquist, Kilduff, Young and Frame.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/25/17, 2/8/17 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Adds that a student's parents or guardians, in addition to the student, must be notified of the student's eligibility for the College Bound Scholarship (CBS) program and the requirements for award of the scholarship in the seventh grade.
- Allows a school administrator or counselor to witness a student's CBS pledge if after multiple documented attempts by the Office of Student Financial Assistance (Office) and the school counselor or administrator to secure the signature of the student's parent or guardian, the signature is still not obtained.
- Prohibits a school counselor or administrator from witnessing a student's CBS pledge if the student's parent or guardian indicated that he or she did not want the student to participate in the CBS program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Minority Member; Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Orwall, Sells, Stambaugh and Tarleton.

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.

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

College Bound Scholarship Program.

The College Board Scholarship (CBS) program was established in 2007 to provide guaranteed four-year tuition to students from low-income families. The first CBS awards were granted to the graduating high school class of 2012. Eligible students for the CBS include those who:

- qualify for free or reduced-price lunches in the seventh grade; or
- are dependent from parents or guardians, or are receiving extended foster care services; and
- are in grades 7 through 12; or
- are between the ages of 18 and 21 years and have not graduated from high school.

Beginning in the seventh grade, eligible students are notified of their eligibility and the requirements for award of the scholarship. To be eligible to receive the CBS, a student must sign a pledge during the seventh or eighth grade that includes a commitment to graduate from high school with at least a C average and no felony convictions. The pledge must be witnessed by a parent or guardian and forwarded to the Office of Student Financial Assistance (Office). If the student is a dependent, the student is automatically enrolled without any necessary action by the student or the student's family.

To receive the CBS, the student must graduate having fulfilled the CBS pledge requirements. Upon graduation, the student's family income will be assessed, and if it does not exceed 65 percent of the state median family income, the student will receive a scholarship.

The CBS recipients that attend public two-year or four-year institutions of higher education receive an award to cover the cost of tuition and fees, minus any state-funded grant, scholarship, or waiver assistance, plus \$500 for books and materials. The student must maintain satisfactory academic progress and may not receive the scholarship for more than four full-time years.

The Office of Student Financial Assistance.

On July 1, 2012, the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) was abolished and the Washington Student Achievement Council (Council) was created in its place. Within the Council is the Office, which is in charge of administering the CBS program, which includes developing and distributing pledge forms, implementing the application and selection process, and tracking scholarship recipients. The Office distributes scholarship funds to the institutions of higher education on behalf of the recipients.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The eligible student's parents or guardians must be notified of the student's eligibility for the CBS and the requirements for award of the scholarship in the seventh grade.

Beginning in the 2017-18 academic year, the Office is required to make multiple attempts to secure the signature of the student's parent or guardian for the purpose of witnessing the student's pledge. If the Office is unable to obtain the signature of the student's parent or guardian, the Office may partner with the school counselor or administrator to secure the parent's or guardian's signature. The school counselor or administrator must make multiple attempts via all telephone numbers, email addresses, and mailing addresses on record to secure the parent's or guardian's signature. If the parent's or guardian's signature is still not obtained, the school counselor or administrator must indicate to the Office the nature of the unsuccessful attempts to contact the student's parent or guardian and the reasons the signature is not available. Then the school counselor or administrator may witness the student's CBS pledge unless the parent or guardian has indicated that they do not wish for the student to participate in the program.

All references to the HECB are updated to the Office of Student Financial Assistance.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill requires the school counselor or administrator to document and maintain all attempts to contact the student's parent or guardian in the student's official file.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) For one reason or another, many parents are not available to witness a student's CBS pledge, and because of this, students miss the opportunity to sign up. The data shows that CBS pledges graduate high school at a higher rate than those students who were eligible, but never signed up. This bill allows a counselor or administrator to verify a student's family income and witness the pledge, which keeps a student's options open. Right now, there are special circumstances where counselors may do this already, but a formal process would increase the sign-up rate for a number of eligible students. Undocumented students' parents may be averse to identifying themselves to any government entity, or the parent may neglect to get the correct paperwork in on time, which means the student may end up attending college on student loans.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Ortiz-Self, prime sponsor; Rachele Sharpe, Washington Student Achievement Council; Ricardo Sanchez, Commission on Hispanic Affairs; and Ky O'Dell.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.