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SENATE BILL 5476

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State of Washington

65th Legislature

2017 Regular Session

By Senators Frockt, Palumbo, Conway, Nelson, Ranker, Darneille, Hasegawa, Billig, Hunt, Saldaña, Kuderer, Rolfes, Keiser, Lias, Pedersen, Carlyle, and Mullet

Read first time 01/25/17. Referred to Committee on Higher Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to expanding state need grant eligibility;  
2 amending RCW 28B.92.060; and creating new sections.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that paying for  
5 college is increasingly difficult for middle and lower income  
6 families. The nationwide average cost of attending college for a  
7 single year is twenty-three thousand six hundred eighty-eight  
8 dollars, and a Washington student who is an only child is currently  
9 ineligible for a state need grant if his or her family income is  
10 greater than thirty-one thousand dollars. It is the intent of the  
11 legislature to expand the number of students eligible for the state  
12 need grant, so that more Washington families can afford to give their  
13 children access to the great universities and community and technical  
14 colleges in this state.

15 **Sec. 2.** RCW 28B.92.060 and 2012 c 229 s 558 are each amended to  
16 read as follows:

17 In awarding need grants, the office shall proceed substantially  
18 as follows: PROVIDED, That nothing contained herein shall be  
19 construed to prevent the office, in the exercise of its sound

1 discretion, from following another procedure when the best interest  
2 of the program so dictates:

3 (1) The office shall annually select the financial aid award  
4 recipients from among Washington residents applying for student  
5 financial aid who have been ranked according to:

6 (a) Financial need as determined by the amount of the family  
7 contribution. Families that earn up to eighty-five percent of the  
8 state's median family income are eligible; and

9 (b) Other considerations, such as whether the student is a former  
10 foster youth, or is a placebound student who has completed an  
11 associate of arts or associate of science degree or its equivalent.

12 (2) The financial need of the highest ranked students shall be  
13 met by grants depending upon the evaluation of financial need until  
14 the total allocation has been disbursed. Funds from grants which are  
15 declined, forfeited or otherwise unused shall be reawarded until  
16 disbursed, except that eligible former foster youth shall be assured  
17 receipt of a grant. The office, in consultation with four-year  
18 institutions of higher education, the council, and the state board  
19 for community and technical colleges, shall develop award criteria  
20 and methods of disbursement based on level of need, and not solely  
21 rely on a first-come, first-served basis.

22 (3) A student shall be eligible to receive a state need grant for  
23 up to five years, or the credit or clock hour equivalent of five  
24 years, or up to one hundred twenty-five percent of the published  
25 length of time of the student's program. A student may not start a  
26 new associate degree program as a state need grant recipient until at  
27 least five years have elapsed since earning an associate degree as a  
28 need grant recipient, except that a student may earn two associate  
29 degrees concurrently. Qualifications for renewal will include  
30 maintaining satisfactory academic progress toward completion of an  
31 eligible program as determined by the office. Should the recipient  
32 terminate his or her enrollment for any reason during the academic  
33 year, the unused portion of the grant shall be returned to the state  
34 educational grant fund by the institution according to the  
35 institution's own policy for issuing refunds, except as provided in  
36 RCW 28B.92.070.

37 (4) In computing financial need, the office shall determine a  
38 maximum student expense budget allowance, not to exceed an amount  
39 equal to the total maximum student expense budget at the public  
40 institutions plus the current average state appropriation per student

1 for operating expense in the public institutions. Any child support  
2 payments received by students who are parents attending less than  
3 half-time shall not be used in computing financial need.

4 (5)(a) A student who is enrolled in three to six credit-bearing  
5 quarter credits, or the equivalent semester credits, may receive a  
6 grant for up to one academic year before beginning a program that  
7 leads to a degree or certificate.

8 (b) An eligible student enrolled on a less-than-full-time basis  
9 shall receive a prorated portion of his or her state need grant for  
10 any academic period in which he or she is enrolled on a less-than-  
11 full-time basis, as long as funds are available.

12 (c) An institution of higher education may award a state need  
13 grant to an eligible student enrolled in three to six credit-bearing  
14 quarter credits, or the semester equivalent, on a provisional basis  
15 if:

16 (i) The student has not previously received a state need grant  
17 from that institution;

18 (ii) The student completes the required free application for  
19 federal student aid;

20 (iii) The institution has reviewed the student's financial  
21 condition, and the financial condition of the student's family if the  
22 student is a dependent student, and has determined that the student  
23 is likely eligible for a state need grant; and

24 (iv) The student has signed a document attesting to the fact that  
25 the financial information provided on the free application for  
26 federal student aid and any additional financial information provided  
27 directly to the institution is accurate and complete, and that the  
28 student agrees to repay the institution for the grant amount if the  
29 student submitted false or incomplete information.

30 (6) As used in this section, "former foster youth" means a person  
31 who is at least eighteen years of age, but not more than twenty-four  
32 years of age, who was a dependent of the department of social and  
33 health services at the time he or she attained the age of eighteen.

34 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** Sections 1 and 2 of this act may be known  
35 and cited as the state need grant eligibility expansion act.

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