
**College & Workforce Development
Committee**

HB 1893

Brief Description: Providing assistance for certain postsecondary students.

Sponsors: Representatives Entenman, Leavitt, Pollet, Paul, Stanford and Valdez.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a grant program for community and technical colleges (CTCs) to provide monetary assistance to students experiencing unforeseen emergencies or situations.
- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to identify educational programs at the CTCs that would meet the requirements of state-approved employment and training programs, for purposes of CTC students being eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Requires the DSHS to request waivers from federal regulations on the SNAP to allow institutions of higher education to accept SNAP benefits on campus and allow students who are eligible for the state need grant to be eligible for SNAP.

Hearing Date: 2/13/19

Staff: Trudes Tango (786-7384).

Background:

Financial Assistance to Community and Technical College Students.

Each institution of higher education must deposit a minimum of 3.5 percent of revenues collected from tuition and services and activities fees in an institutional financial aid fund. Moneys in the fund must be used to make long-term and short-term loans to certain eligible students and to provide financial aid to needy students. A "needy student" means a student who demonstrates an inability to meet the total cost of room, board, books, tuition, and fees for any semester or quarter. Most community and technical colleges offer grants, rather than loans, to

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needy students using moneys from their funds. Students are required to fill out an application and moneys are used on a first come, first serve basis.

Most community and technical colleges (CTCs) also have food pantries, with each college having their own criteria for how students access food pantries. Other aid at CTCs include the Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) program, which is funded by federal dollars and administered by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). The BFET program provides employability assessments and services to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients who are not participating in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) WorkFirst program. All CTCs participate in the BFET program. In addition to job training services, the BFET benefits can include emergency aid for child care, transportation, or other needs related to job seeking and employability.

Basic Food Program.

The SNAP program, which is called Basic Food in Washington and is administered by the DSHS, provides nutritional support benefits to low-income individuals and families. Generally, a person must be at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level to be eligible for benefits. Congress authorizes funding and establishes SNAP requirements.

For a student of higher education to receive Basic Food, the student must meet certain income thresholds and meet other conditions mandated by federal law. One condition that allows a student to receive Basic Food is if the student is in "an approved state or local employment and training program," which must meet federal criteria.

The Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card operates like a debit card and may contain food benefits under SNAP and cash benefits under TANF for recipients of those programs. The EBT card for SNAP benefits may only be used at retail stores that have been approved by the USDA. In general, a retail store may be eligible to accept SNAP benefits if it sells food for home preparation and consumption and meets other federal criteria, such as having more than 50 percent of the total dollar amount of all retail sales be from the sale of eligible staple foods (such as meat, poultry, fish, dairy products, vegetables, fruits, bread).

In general, a person may not use SNAP benefits to purchase foods sold hot at the point-of-sale. Under some limited conditions, restaurants may be authorized to accept the SNAP benefits from qualified homeless, elderly, or disabled people.

A state may apply to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) for a waiver to the federal SNAP rules.

Summary of Bill:

Grant Program for Community and Technical Colleges.

The emergency assistance grant program, administered by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), is established for CTCs to provide monetary assistance to students experiencing unforeseen emergencies or situations that affect the student's ability to attend classes.

The CTCs applying for the grant must demonstrate need, which may include showing demographic data on student income levels, students experiencing homelessness or food insecurity, and other factors. The CTC applicants must also: ensure that students' access to emergency aid funds will be as low barrier as possible; allow flexibility in who may apply for funds and include students who may not necessarily meet the definition of "needy student" but who may be experiencing emergency situations; and indicate how the CTC will prioritize the disbursement of emergency aid funds.

The CTC must use grant funds to provide monetary aid to students to assist them in, for example, purchasing food, and paying for transportation, child care, or other goods or services needed in order for the student to continue attending classes.

In selecting grant recipients, the SBCTC must consider a CTC's demonstration of need and the resources and programs already in existence at the college. The SBCTC must begin accepting applications for the grant by December 1, 2019, and must submit annual reports to the Legislature by December 1, 2020.

Request for Waivers for Basic Food.

The DSHS must request from the USDA waivers from federal regulations on SNAP to:

- allow institutions of higher education to accept SNAP benefits in the form of EBT cards at on-campus food retail establishments; and
- allow postsecondary students who are eligible for the state need grant to be eligible for SNAP.

The DSHS, in consultation with the SBCTC, must also identify educational programs at the CTCs that would meet the requirements of state-approved employment and training programs, for purposes of CTC students being eligible for SNAP.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 4, 2019.

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