

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SB 5635

---

### As Reported by House Committee On: College & Workforce Development

**Title:** An act relating to expanding opportunities for students to pursue mental and behavioral health professions.

**Brief Description:** Expanding opportunities for students to pursue mental and behavioral health professions.

**Sponsors:** Senators Brown, Bailey, Rivers, Walsh, Becker, King, Warnick, Frockt, Wilson, L., Hasegawa, Zeiger and O'Ban.

#### **Brief History:**

##### **Committee Activity:**

College & Workforce Development: 3/19/19, 3/26/19 [DPA].

#### **Brief Summary of Bill (As Amended by Committee)**

- Increases the credit limit under the Opportunity Grant Program from 45 to 90 credits for students pursuing behavioral health professions.
- Strikes the service obligation for students pursuing advanced degrees in health professions under the Washington State Opportunity Scholarship program.

---

### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COLLEGE & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 16 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Entenman, Vice Chair; Leavitt, Vice Chair; Van Werven, Ranking Minority Member; Gildon, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Graham, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Kraft, Mead, Paul, Pollet, Ramos, Rude, Sells, Slatter and Sutherland.

**Staff:** Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

#### **Background:**

Opportunity Grant Program.

---

*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.*

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges administers the Opportunity Grant Program, which provides financial assistance to low-income students pursuing workforce education programs. The Opportunity Grant Program provides funding for tuition and mandatory fees, plus an additional \$1,000 grant per academic year for books, tools, and supplies. Students who are residents, have an income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, and complete a financial aid application are eligible for the grant. A student may receive the grant for 45 credits or for three years. Students receiving the Opportunity Grant are also eligible for support services up to \$1,500 per year, which may include tutoring, advising, emergency child care, or emergency transportation.

Washington State Opportunity Scholarship Program.

The Washington State Opportunity Scholarship (WSOS) program was established in 2011 to provide scholarships to low and middle-income resident students pursuing eligible high-demand degrees in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and health care, and to encourage scholarship recipients to work in the state upon completion of their degrees. The WSOS Board oversees the program and determines which programs qualify as high-demand degrees. The eligible student needs to be working towards a first bachelor's degree or a professional-technical certificate or degree at an eligible Washington college or university. In 2018 the WSOS program was expanded to also include scholarships for students pursuing advanced degrees in health professions if the student agreed to a service obligation after graduation. For the 2017-18 academic year, 1,862 recipients were selected to receive the scholarship.

---

**Summary of Amended Bill:**

Opportunity Grant Program.

The Opportunity Grant Program is expanded to allow students pursuing behavioral health professions to qualify for the award for 90 credits or up to four years.

Washington State Opportunity Scholarship Program.

For students pursuing advanced degrees in health professions, the service obligation is removed. The WSOS Board is required to identify high employer demand programs of study rather than determine high employer demand programs. Additional technical corrections are made to the account language.

**Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

Under the Opportunity Grant Program expansion, the definition of "behavioral health professions" was removed. Under the WSOS program, the service obligation for students pursuing advanced degrees in health professions was struck.

---

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Amended 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) This bill creates a pipeline to help and encourage more students into mental health professions. The additional credits go a long way in helping these students pursue mental health professions.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Senator Brown, prime sponsor.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.