

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5709

As of February 18, 2019

Title: An act relating to creating the Native American opportunity scholarship program.

Brief Description: Creating the Native American opportunity scholarship program.

Sponsors: Senators McCoy, Salomon, Hunt, Nguyen, Hasegawa, Hobbs, Saldaña, Conway, Keiser, Kuderer, Randall and Van De Wege.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/31/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the Native American Opportunity Scholarship.
- Allows the Washington Student Achievement Council to contract with a program administrator to implement the scholarship program.
- Requires the state to appropriate matching funds for private contributions made to the scholarship.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

Background: American Indian Endowed Scholarship. In 1990, the Legislature created the American Indian Endowed Scholarship. This program provides educational scholarships on a competitive basis to high-achieving, low-income resident students who have close social and cultural ties to an American Indian tribe or community within the state. Recipients demonstrate academic merit and a commitment to serve the American Indian communities in Washington.

Funding is prioritized for upper-division and graduate students. Students can use the scholarships at public colleges and many accredited independent colleges in Washington. In 2017-18, 14 students received the scholarship.

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.

All donations and allotted funds are kept in a permanent endowment trust with the state treasurer. The interest earnings of that fund provide for the annual scholarship awards. Representatives of the American Indian community formed a nonprofit organization, Friends of American Indians in Education, to promote and coordinate fundraising activities for the scholarship.

Summary of Bill: The Native American Opportunity Scholarship is created. Eligible students:

- have been accepted at an institution of higher education leading to a degree or credential or are enrolled in a registered apprenticeship program;
- are enrolled for at least three quarter credits or the semester equivalent; and
- are a member of a federally recognized tribe.

The Washington Student Achievement Council is authorized to contract with a program administrator to implement the scholarship program. The program administrator must:

- staff the scholarship board;
- publicize the award;
- select participants for the award;
- distribute the awards; and
- fundraise and manage the investments of the fund.

The program administrator must fundraise for the program. A state match is earned for private contributions made after September 1, 2019.

The Native American Opportunity Scholarship Board is created to oversee the program. The board consists of seven members:

- three members appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the House and Senate; and
- four members who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes within Washington

At least one member from a federally recognized Indian tribe must be from eastern Washington and at least one member from a federally recognized tribe must be from western Washington.

The Native American Opportunity Scholarship Account is created in the custody of the state treasurer.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 28, 2019.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: With a new structure and new publicity around this bill we think we can create more opportunities for Native American students. The idea is

that tribes will raise money for these scholarships and then the state will match it. This builds on the Opportunity Scholarship Program but is broader because it allows liberal arts majors to qualify. We have an American Indian studies program which was established over 50 years ago and is geared towards the retention and recruitment of this population of students. We appreciate that this bill may help us in those endeavors. We also appreciate that it has tribal representation from both sides of the states and applies broadly to all types of majors. This legislation is geared towards the types of students who I grew up with who were often in poverty. This bill can help with the achievement gap for Native American youth and help lift those kids out of poverty. This kind of partnership between tribes and the state can help some of our most vulnerable populations.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator John McCoy, Prime Sponsor; Charles Adkins, Director of Legislative Affairs, Geoduck Student Union of the Evergreen State College; David Buri, Eastern Washington University.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.