

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6561

As of January 31, 2020

Title: An act relating to higher education funding options for dreamers.

Brief Description: Creating the undocumented student support loan program.

Sponsors: Senators Liias, Saldaña, Das, Nguyen, Hasegawa, Stanford, Dhingra, Hunt, Kuderer, Wellman and Wilson, C.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/30/20.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a loan program for resident students who are not eligible for federal student loans because of citizenship status.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Kellee Gunn (786-7429)

Background: Financial Aid Options for Undocumented Students. Both U.S. citizens and non-citizens who meet certain residency criteria in Washington may qualify for state financial aid programs like the Washington College Grant, the College Bound Scholarship, and Washington State Opportunity Scholarship. Students may use these financial aid programs at eligible public and private colleges and universities in Washington. Undocumented and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) students may be eligible for some institutional scholarships, depending on donor criteria.

Undocumented, DACA, and non-resident students are not eligible for federal financial aid programs such as the Pell Grant and federal student loans.

Summary of Bill: Undocumented Student Support Loan Program. The Undocumented Student Support Loan Program, administered by the Office of Student Financial Assistance under the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), is created to offer low-interest loans to resident students who would not otherwise be eligible for federal student loans

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because of their citizenship status. The program must be designed in consultation with financial aid professionals, relevant student associations, certain non-profit programs, and other stakeholders.

The loan award amount at either a public or private institution cannot be more than the cost of attendance minus any other financial aid, up to the amount of the average award at a public research institution. The loans must be low-interest and be competitive with federal student loans. In developing the loan program, WSAC must consider repayment options such as public service loan forgiveness and income-based repayment. WSAC, with higher education institution representatives, must screen and select eligible student recipients of the loan using the student's financial need as a factor.

Data collected by the program must only be used for statistical analysis, research, and evaluation purposes. Data sharing may be extended to certain state governmental entities with oversight for the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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: We know from the data that this is a small group of students. They have dreams far bigger than the system can provide. There are critical barriers for these students to access student loans. This is a way for undocumented students to pay for their education, the same way other students can through federal student loans.

When I decided to go to college, it was late in my senior year and it was too late for me to apply for scholarships. The ability to go to school now requires me to work at the same time as attend full time. It is stressful. WSU was my first choice because of their nursing program. There is a limited amount of scholarships I can apply for, and I do not qualify for federal student loans. Housing was a major barrier as the scholarships did not pay for housing. I want to become an immigration lawyer and this bill would allow me to go to law school and afford it. This would take the burden off my parents and allow me to take on the responsibility of paying for my higher education. Because I am undocumented without DACA, I do not qualify for work-study. My parents are agricultural workers, and I have another sibling who would like to attend college. My parents cannot support our higher education and this bill will allow me and my siblings to afford higher education. If I had the opportunity to take out federal student loans, I would be able to focus more on school than on food or housing. This loan could be the difference between dropping out and graduating. This bill will bring hope to undocumented students. I am a high school senior and a running start student. My graduating high school class is the first without DACA protections. My generation relies on legislation like this.

There are costs such as transportation and room and board that are not necessarily covered by grants and scholarships. Being a low-income undocumented student does not leave me with many choices. After securing scholarships there is still a gap in funding that needs to be covered somehow. Having low interest student loans to cover these costs is better than having students try to find options themselves. California has a great program.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Marko Lias, Prime Sponsor; Yuleidy Rodriguez, Undocumented Initiatives; Alondra Munoz, Undocumented Initiatives; Venus Lomeli Perez, Crimson Group; Raul Jiminez, Crimson Group–Washington State University; Sugeysi Layata, Crimson Group–Washington State University; Orlando Cano, One America; Guillermo Rogel, Washington Student Association; Ana Karen Betancourt Macias, Ana Karen Betancourt Macias Family Foundation; Davina Cepeda, Associated Students of Washington State University Vancouver; Alex Paulino Rodrigues, citizen; Diana Luis Contreras, citizen; Kaitie Dong, youth organizer, OneAmerica; Betsy Camacho, citizen; Nancy Canales-Montiel, Association Students of CWU; Litzy Canales, citizen; Jorge Chavarin, citizen.

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