
College & Workforce Development Committee

HB 1425

Brief Description: Expanding scholarships for community and technical college students.

Sponsors: Representatives Taylor, Leavitt, Valdez, Santos, Johnson, J., Ortiz-Self, Simmons, Rule, Ramel, Chopp, Pollet, Hackney and Morgan.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands the Washington State Opportunity Scholarship (WSOS) to include education programs leading to industry-recognized credentials.
- Modifies student eligibility for the Career and Technical WSOS.
- Modifies student eligibility requirement for the Rural Jobs Initiative within the WSOS.

Hearing Date: 2/4/21

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

Washington State Opportunity Scholarship.

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 majors in science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), and health care, and to encourage scholarship recipients to work in the state upon completion of their degrees. The WSOS is a private-public match program in which the state matches any private donations in order to fund the scholarships. The state match is capped at \$50 million annually.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The WSOS was expanded in 2017 and 2018, and now includes three possible scholarships. The Baccalaureate Scholarship, the Career and Technical Scholarship, and the Graduate Scholarship. The Baccalaureate Scholarship provides up to \$22,500 over five years to pursue a bachelor's degree in STEM or health care. In 2020, 750 new students received a scholarship. The Career and Technical Scholarship provides \$1,500 per quarter to a student pursuing an apprenticeship or a certificate or associate's degree in a professional-technical program. In 2020, 552 students received a scholarship. The Graduate Pathway will be accepting applicants for the 2021-22 academic year for students pursuing a Doctor of Nursing Practice or a Master of Science in Nursing degree.

Students have to meet certain requirements to qualify for the Baccalaureate and Career and Technical Scholarships. A student must:

- be a Washington state resident;
- have earned a high school diploma or equivalent in Washington;
- have a total family income that does not exceed 125 percent of Washington state family median income based on family size;
- file a financial aid form;
- have a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.75 or a passing General Educational Development test score (for the Baccalaureate Scholarship only);
- plan to pursue an eligible certificate or degree at an eligible higher education institution;
- plan to enroll at least half-time (at least 6 credits for the Career and Technical Scholarship); and
- not already have a bachelor's degree.

Rural Jobs Initiative.

In addition, the Rural Jobs initiative (RJI) is administered by the WSOS. The RJI is a separate scholarship program within the Career and Technical Scholarship. To qualify for the RJI, a student needs to:

- be a Washington state resident;
- be a resident of a rural county or have graduated from a Washington high school in a district with fewer than 2,000 students;
- have a family income that does not exceed 70 percent of Washington state median family income adjusted for family size;
- be enrolled in a certificate, degree, or other industry-recognized credential or training program that prepares a student for a high-employer-demand field; and
- be enrolled at a community or technical college in a rural county.

The RJI recipients are eligible to receive \$3,500 in their first quarter, \$2,500 in their second quarter, and \$2,000 per quarter for the remainder of their program. In 2020, 17 students received a scholarship.

Summary of Bill:

The WSOS is expanded to include students who are pursuing an education program that leads to an industry-recognized credential under the Career and Technical Scholarship. “Industry-recognized credential” is defined as a license or professional certification recognized by employers as necessary for employment that is obtained through a noncredit-bearing program at a community or technical college.

Eligibility for the Career and Technical Scholarship is expanded by removing the requirement for a student to have received a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate in Washington.

Eligibility for the RJI is modified. To be eligible for the RJI a student must either:

- be a resident of a rural county and be enrolled in a community or technical college; or
- have graduated from a school in a rural county and be enrolled in a community or technical college located in a rural county.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 29, 2021.

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