

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1425

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education & Workforce Development, March 18, 2021

Title: An act relating to amending the opportunity scholarship act to expand scholarships for community and technical college students.

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

Sponsors: House Committee on College & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Representatives Taylor, Leavitt, Valdez, Santos, Johnson, J., Ortiz-Self, Simmons, Rule, Ramel, Chopp, Pollet, Hackney and Morgan).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/25/21, 98-0.

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 3/11/21, 3/18/21 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Eliminates the community college and advanced degree program award requirement that a student must have graduated from a Washington high school.
- Modifies the residency requirements for the rural jobs program.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Randall, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Member; Liias.

Staff: Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

Background: Washington State Opportunity Scholarship Program. The Washington State

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.

Opportunity Scholarship (WSOS) program was established in 2011 to provide scholarships to low- and middle-income resident students pursuing eligible high-demand baccalaureate degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, and health care, and to encourage scholarship recipients to work in the state upon completion of their degrees. The program was expanded in 2018 to provide awards to students in high-demand community and technical college programs as well as advanced degree programs.

Rural County High Employer Demand Jobs Program. The Rural County High Employer Demand Jobs Program (rural jobs) was established in 2018 to meet the workforce needs of business and industry in rural counties, by assisting students in earning certificates, associate degrees, or other industry-recognized credentials necessary for employment in high employer demand fields. Funding for the program is a combination of private funds and state matching funds. State matching funds may not exceed \$1 million in a single fiscal biennium. Under the program, students are eligible to receive scholarship funds and support services, as determined by the WSOS Board, to help meet eligible expenses when the student enrolls in a public community and technical college program that prepares students for a high employer demand field.

Summary of Bill: To be eligible for the career and technical scholarship or the advanced degree program under the WSOS, a student no longer must have graduated from a Washington high school.

Eligibility for the rural jobs scholarship is modified. To be eligible for the rural jobs award 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: 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: This came out of the house with 100 percent support. This bill is about eligibility and access for young people as those returning to college as they pivot in this current economy. We are all looking ways for our community members to access this opportunity. This is critical for our residents who are in rural areas who do not have the opportunity to come to Seattle. This will help bring more opportunities into our respective communities. The bill in front of you makes some technical changes to address some obstacles to students in our community and technical colleges. This will address access for adult and veteran learners who may be returning to our institutions later

in life. This will make technical changes to several obstacles limiting access to the WSOS program. This will give low-income and rural residents a hand up. This bill will remove barriers to credential attainment and create pathways to long term prosperity.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Jamila Taylor, Prime Sponsor; Jessica Monger, Washington State Opportunity Scholarship; Albert Sardinias, Washington Build Back Black Alliance; Bish Paul, Washington STEM.

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