

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESSB 5321

C 283 L 21
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Expanding access to the college bound scholarship.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Nobles, Das, Dhingra, Frockt, Hasegawa, Lias, Lovelett, Nguyen, Randall, Saldaña, Stanford and Wilson, C.).

Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development
Senate Committee on Ways & Means
House Committee on College & Workforce Development
House Committee on Appropriations

Background: The College Bound Scholarship Program (CBS) was established in 2007 to provide guaranteed four-year tuition to students from low-income families. The first CBS awards were granted to the graduating high school class of 2012. Eligible students for the CBS include those who:

- qualify for free or reduced-price lunches in the seventh, eighth, and under certain circumstances ninth grade;
- are in grades seven through twelve, and are dependent on parents or guardians, or are receiving extended foster care services; or
- are between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one years of age and have not graduated from high school.

Beginning in the seventh grade, eligible students are notified of their eligibility and the requirements for award of the scholarship. To be eligible to receive the CBS, a student must sign a pledge during the seventh or eighth grade that includes a commitment to graduate from high school with at least a C average and no felony convictions. The pledge must be witnessed by a parent or guardian and forwarded to the Office of Student Financial Assistance within the Washington Student Achievement Council. If the student is a dependent, the student is automatically enrolled without any necessary action by the student or the student's family.

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.

To receive the CBS, the student must graduate with at least a C average from a public high school, approved private high school, or have received home-based instruction. The student cannot have a felony conviction and must be a resident student. Upon graduation, the student's family income will be assessed, and if it does not exceed 65 percent of the state median family income (MFI), the student will receive a scholarship.

CBS recipients that attend public two-year or four-year higher education institutions receive an award to cover the cost of tuition and fees, minus any state-funded grant, scholarship, or waiver assistance, plus \$500 for books and materials. The student must maintain satisfactory academic progress and may not receive the scholarship for more than four full-time years.

Summary: The requirement that a student sign a pledge to be eligible for the CBS is eliminated. The Legislature intends to create a statutory contractual right for students who fulfill the CBS requirements. A student has a vested right to the award of a CBS if they:

- qualify for free or reduced-price lunch in the seventh, eighth, or, under certain circumstances, ninth grade;
- graduate high school with a minimum of a C average;
- have no felony convictions;
- are a resident student; and
- have a family income that does not exceed 65 percent of the median family income at the time of graduation.

Eligible students must enroll within one-year of high school graduation. The award must be used within a five-year period and must not exceed four full-time years worth of scholarship awards.

Eligible students, to the maximum extent practicable, must acknowledge enrollment in the college bound program and receipt of the scholarship requirements.

The Office of Financial Assistance must take reasonable steps to ensure students acknowledge enrollment in the program. The office must develop a process for auto-enrolling and notifying all eligible students of the scholarship and its requirements.

The requirements in this act are applied retroactively to students, beginning with the 2019-20 school year.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	31	17	
Senate	31	18	
House	60	38	(House amended) (Senate refused to concur/asks House to recede)
House	60	37	(House receded)

Effective: May 12, 2021