

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5614

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education & Workforce Development, January 20, 2022

Title: An act relating to the Washington national guard postsecondary education grant program.

Brief Description: Concerning the Washington national guard postsecondary education grant program.

Sponsors: Senators Randall, Holy, Conway, Das, Kuderer, Lovick, Mullet, Nobles, Padden, Stanford and Wilson, C.; by request of Military Department.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/13/22, 1/20/22 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Eliminates the requirement that a National Guard member has not achieved a baccalaureate degree or higher.
- Adds a requirement that a National Guard member be enrolled in courses or programs that lead to a postsecondary degree or credential.
- Modifies the maximum grant to not exceed the maximum Washington college grant and additional stipulations.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

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

Staff: Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

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.

Background: Washington State National Guard Conditional Scholarship Program. The Washington State National Guard Conditional Scholarship program was created in 1994, and is administered by the Office of the Adjutant General of the State Military Department. In 2020, the program was renamed the Washington National Guard Postsecondary Education Grant Program. A student is eligible for the grant program if:

- they are a member of the Washington National Guard;
- they attend an accredited institution in Washington State;
- a baccalaureate degree or higher from any postsecondary institution has not been awarded;
- they are an active drilling member in good standing in the Washington National Guard;
- they have completed and submitted an application for student aid;
- they are a resident student; and
- they agree to fulfill the student's service obligation.

Eligible participants in the grant program incur an obligation to repay the grant with interest, unless they serve in the Washington National Guard for one year for each year they receive the award.

Washington College Grant. The maximum Washington College Grant (WCG) award covers tuition, and services and activities fees for 15 quarter credits or the equivalent at the state's public institutions. For example, the 2021-22 maximum award for students attending the University of Washington is \$11,339.

Summary of Bill: Eligibility. Eligibility for the Washington National Guard postsecondary education grant program is modified to require that students are enrolled in courses or programs that lead to a postsecondary degree or credential. The requirement that a student has not achieved a baccalaureate or higher degree is eliminated.

Grants. Eligible students may receive grants to pay for postsecondary education program costs. Grants may not:

- exceed the maximum WCG award, plus \$500 for books and supplies;
- exceed the student's cost of attendance, when combined with other sources of aid; or
- result in a reduction of the participant's federal or other state aid.

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 bill expands the grant program and

builds on the lessons that we learned from the most recent iteration of this bill. It makes sure we are reaching the students we intend to reach and giving them the tools to be successful in this economy. This will make sure that more people are eligible to take advantage of the resources that we have set aside. This bill makes important changes to help our service members with career development and advancement. We are incredibly supportive of your work in 2020 which created this program. In it's first year this program has had more than 175 applications. Its proving to be an important recruitment and retention tool which is what we hoped. It is now our goal to make sure this money is allocated for equitably. Often low-income students receive more federal and state aid. As a result, higher income members receive higher awards under this program. What we know is the lowest income students are receiving the lowest award. Although tuition and books are covered for these students, the costs of housing and transportation are going unmet.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Emily Randall, Prime Sponsor; Becky Thompson, WSAC-Washington Student Achievement Council; Charles Barnett, National Guard Association of Washington; Brigadier General Gent Welsh.

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