

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5797

As of January 18, 2022

Title: An act relating to the opportunity scholarship program.

Brief Description: Concerning the opportunity scholarship program.

Sponsors: Senators Liias, Short, Carlyle, Dhingra, Frockt, Lovick, Randall and Stanford.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/18/22.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Aligns certain definitions for eligibility for the Washington State Opportunity Scholarship (WSOS) program to the Washington College Grant (WCG).
- Increases the state median income for advanced degree WSOS students if the student demonstrates need through other factors.
- Expands the professional-technical degree WSOS program to registered apprentices eligible for the WCG.
- Establishes that the state match for the rural jobs WSOS program must be based off funds received as of the caseload forecast.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Kellee Gunn (786-7429)

Background: Washington State Opportunity Scholarship Program. 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 baccalaureate

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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, advanced degree programs, and studying for high-demand jobs in rural counties.

Summary of Bill: Several changes are made to the WSOS program, with specific changes made to the advanced degree program, rural jobs program, and high-demand community and technical college program.

All Washington State Opportunity Scholarship Programs. The definition of "satisfactory academic progress" and "resident student" for a student to be eligible for the WSOS program are aligned with the Washington College Grant (WCG). The date in which a WSOS scholarship ends, or is no longer automatically renewed, is amended to include five years—in addition to 125 percent of the program length or credit or clock hour equivalent—as defined for the WCG.

Advanced Degree Program. If a WSOS advanced degree student demonstrates financial need through factors such as prior household income, income loss caused by entering the advanced degree program, or level of student debt, then the median income for qualifying may be exceeded. The level of student debt must be provided at application and annually thereafter.

Professional-Technical Degree Program. Registered apprenticeships are included as eligible programs under the professional-technical degree WSOS program.

Rural Jobs Program. Students who are residents of a rural county may qualify for the rural jobs program if they meet other residency requirements, are attending a community or technical college in a rural county, and have graduated from a school in an eligible school district. To ensure predictable treatment of the program in the budget process, the state match for the rural jobs program must be based on donations and pledges received as of the date of the caseload forecast.

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 builds on a successful program, which is in its ninth year. The WSOS is a public-private effort to provide scholarships to

students. This bill aligns nicely with other work currently being done to provide apprentices funding to complete their apprenticeships. This program has brought students from historically marginalized backgrounds into institutions of higher education, studying in high demand fields. The University of Washington is proud to have graduated over 2000 WSOS recipients over the course of the program. Washington needs to provide multiple scholarship opportunities to students. Expanding eligibility for advanced degree recipients is important. Allowing WSOS to take debt into account for the advanced degree program will help Washington address critical healthcare workforce shortages. The WSOS's success comes from students who are often underrepresented in the program they are pursuing. Aligning WSOS to WCG, establishing when donations from the caseload forecasts for the rural jobs program may be counted, and expanding the median income eligibility for nurse practitioners will be important for WSOS to provide these necessary funds to eligible students.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Marko Liias, Prime Sponsor; Jacob Vigdor, University of Washington Faculty; Jessica Monger, Washington State Opportunity Scholarship; Juliette Schindler, College Success Foundation.

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