

2SHB 1559 - S COMM AMD
By Committee on Ways & Means

ADOPTED 04/12/2023

1 Strike everything after the enacting clause and insert the
2 following:

3 "NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** In 2022, students at 39 colleges and
4 universities across Washington state participated in a survey about
5 basic needs insecurities, including access to food, housing, child
6 care, and more. The survey found that nearly half of all students in
7 all regions of the state experienced some type of basic needs
8 insecurity. One in every three students experienced either food
9 insecurity or housing insecurity. One in every 10 students had also
10 experienced homelessness in the previous 12 months. Some students
11 experienced these insecurities at higher rates than others, and
12 former foster youth had the highest rates of basic needs insecurities
13 with 75 percent experiencing either food or housing insecurity.
14 Addressing basic needs challenges for students contributes to their
15 ability to remain enrolled and pursue their educational goals as
16 evidenced by data from the two student support programs the
17 legislature previously enacted, the student emergency assistance
18 grant program and the supporting students experiencing homelessness
19 pilot program. When students received this assistance, an average of
20 88 percent of them were able to persist in their programs.

21 Therefore, the legislature intends to continue to support
22 students and help students meet their basic needs by increasing
23 access to resources and support services.

24 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.10
25 RCW to read as follows:

26 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
27 specific purpose, each institution of higher education, the
28 university campuses created under chapter 28B.45 RCW, and the tribal
29 college must have a minimum of one part-time benefits navigator to
30 assist students in accessing public benefits and existing emergency
31 assistance programs such as those funded by RCW 28B.50.295. The

1 institutions of higher education and the tribal college, in
2 coordination with the respective benefits navigators, may:

3 (a) Identify campus food pantry policies that, in practice,
4 create barriers to access and reduce or remove those barriers in the
5 implementation of this subsection;

6 (b) Review and update methods to identify likely low-income and
7 food-insecure students and conduct communications and outreach
8 methods by the institution to promote opportunities for benefits
9 assistance (such as basic food enrollment, working connections child
10 care enrollment, referrals to the special supplemental nutrition
11 program for women, infants, and children, affordable housing
12 assistance) and emergency financial resources;

13 (c) Identify opportunities for the institution and partnerships
14 with community-based organizations to holistically support students'
15 basic needs, access to benefits and community resources; and

16 (d) Facilitate discussions and generate recommendations amongst
17 community stakeholders on the basic needs of the institution's
18 geographic postsecondary student population.

19 (2) Public four-year institutions of higher education and their
20 respective university campuses shall coordinate with an organization
21 representing the presidents of the public four-year institutions to
22 submit a report that must include outcomes from implementation of
23 benefits navigators, and provide recommendations regarding strategies
24 to address student basic needs. The community and technical colleges
25 shall coordinate with the state board for community and technical
26 colleges to submit a report that must include outcomes from
27 implementation of benefits navigators, and provide recommendations
28 regarding strategies to address student basic needs. The
29 organizations representing the presidents of the public four-year
30 institutions and the state board for community and technical colleges
31 must submit the reports by December 1, 2025, and every other year
32 thereafter, to the appropriate committees of the legislature in
33 accordance with RCW 43.01.036.

34 (3) The tribal college shall submit a report that must include
35 the findings and activities from implementation of the benefits
36 navigator and provide recommendations regarding strategies to address
37 student basic needs. The tribal college must submit the report by
38 December 1, 2025, and every other year thereafter, to the appropriate
39 committees of the legislature in accordance with RCW 43.01.036.

1 (4) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this
2 section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

3 (a) "Benefits navigator" means an individual who is employed by
4 an institution of higher education for the purpose of helping
5 students seek, apply for, and receive assistance from benefits
6 programs, emergency resources, and community resources.

7 (b) "Institutions of higher education" has the same meaning as in
8 RCW 28B.10.016.

9 (c) "Student basic needs" means food, water, shelter, clothing,
10 physical health, mental health, child care, or similar needs that
11 students enrolled at an institution of higher education or tribal
12 college may face difficulty with and that hinders their ability to
13 begin or continue their enrollment.

14 (d) "Tribal colleges" means institutions of higher education
15 operated by an Indian tribe as defined in RCW 43.376.010.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) Subject to the availability of amounts
17 appropriated for this specific purpose, a pilot program to provide
18 free and low-cost meal plans or food vouchers to eligible low-income
19 students is established at:

20 (a) Four college districts, two on each side of the crest of the
21 Cascade mountains, selected by the state board for community and
22 technical colleges; and

23 (b) Two public four-year institutions of higher education, one on
24 each side of the crest of the Cascade mountains, selected by an
25 organization representing the presidents of public four-year
26 institutions.

27 (2) The pilot program expires July 1, 2026.

28 (3) This section expires January 1, 2027.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** If specific funding for the purposes of
30 this act, referencing this act by bill or chapter number, is not
31 provided by June 30, 2023, in the omnibus appropriations act, this
32 act is null and void."

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1 On page 1, line 2 of the title, after "act;" strike the remainder
2 of the title and insert "adding a new section to chapter 28B.10 RCW;
3 creating new sections; and providing an expiration date."

EFFECT: (1) Eliminates the establishment of basic needs task forces at the public four year institutions, university campuses, and state board; and, no longer requires the development of basic needs strategic plans.

(2) Specifies that each benefits navigator must be at least part-time and makes the hiring of benefit navigators subject to appropriations.

(3) Eliminates the requirement that benefit navigators be full time.

(4) Specifies activities that the institutions of higher education and the tribal college, in coordination with benefits navigators may engage in.

(5) Requires the public four year institutions and the university campuses to collaborate on a report to the legislature regarding outcome from the implementation of benefit navigators. Requires the college board to submit a report to the legislature on the outcomes from benefits navigators on behalf of the CTCs.

(6) Eliminates the requirement that benefits hubs be established.

(7) Eliminates the basic needs survey requirement.

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