

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## 2SHB 1559

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Establishing the student basic needs at public postsecondary institutions act.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Entenman, Fitzgibbon, Stonier, Paul, Riccelli, Bergquist, Pollet and Leavitt).

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

### **Background:**

Several community and technical colleges provide a range of on-campus resource services. Lower Columbia College's One-Stop Center offers students general information and connection with resources. Edmonds College has a Center for Student Cultural Diversity and Inclusion, which provides emergency resources. South Puget Sound Community College's Personal Support Center offers assistance with food, connection to housing and basic needs support, and on-campus childcare and parent support classes.

United Way of King County provides Benefits Hubs to nine community and technical colleges in King County: Bellevue College, Cascadia College, Highline College, Green River College, North Seattle College, Renton Technical College, Seattle Central College, Shoreline Community College, and South Seattle College; and one baccalaureate institution, University of Washington Bothell. The Benefits Hubs offer a variety of services such as financial coaching, basic needs access, food security, and emergency grant help.

In addition to University of Washington Bothell, there are several baccalaureate institutions that offer similar campus benefits resource hubs or services. The Evergreen State College has a Basic Needs Advocacy and Resource Center that provides navigation support for public benefits, housing, and basic needs. The University of Washington Tacoma has an Office of Student Advocacy and Support offering extensive assessment, case management,

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and resource connections. Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, Western Washington University, and Washington State University do not offer a centralized, physical resource hub, but do provide case management and access to resources and referrals, such as food pantries.

**Summary:**

Subject to appropriations, institutions of higher education, community and technical colleges, and the tribal college must each employ at least one Benefits Navigator, to be employed at a minimum of .75 FTE and filled by a single individual. Each Benefits navigator must be stationed at a single location on campus where students are directed to receive assistance. A Benefits Navigator helps students seek, apply for, and receive assistance from benefits programs, emergency resources, and community resources.

Student basic needs are food, water, shelter, clothing, physical health, mental health, childcare, or similar needs that students enrolled at an institution of higher education, community or technical college, or tribal college may face difficulty with, and that hinders their ability to begin or continue their enrollment. The institutions of higher education, community and technical colleges, and the tribal college, in coordination with their respective Benefits Navigators, must each develop a Hunger-Free and Basic Needs Campus Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) by April 1, 2024.

Each Strategic Plan must:

- reduce or remove barriers to accessing campus food pantries;
- conduct outreach targeted at likely low-income and food-insecure students by promoting opportunities for benefits assistance and emergency financial resources;
- identify opportunities for partnerships with community-based organizations;
- assess the needs and advantages of the Benefits Navigators;
- facilitate discussions amongst community stakeholders on student basic needs; and
- assess the distribution of state funds for basic needs support.

Outcomes from the Benefits Navigators and findings and activities from each Strategic Plan must be reported to the Legislature by December 1, 2025, and every other year thereafter.

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) must collaborate with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (State Board) and an organization representing the presidents of the public four-year institutions of higher education to develop a student survey assessing food security, housing security, and access to basic economic supports. The WSAC must collect and disseminate the results of this survey, which may be used by institutions of higher education and the tribal college.

Subject to appropriations, an organization representing the presidents of the public four-year institutions of higher education must select two public four-year institutions of higher education, one on each side of the crest of the Cascade Mountains, and the State Board must

select four community and technical college districts, two on each side of the crest of the Cascade Mountains, to participate in a pilot program that provides free and low-cost meal plans or food vouchers to eligible low-income students.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

House 57 40

Senate 29 20 (Senate amended)

House (House refused to concur/asked Senate to recede)

Senate 28 20 (Senate receded/amended)

House 55 40 (House concurred)

**Effective:** July 23, 2023