

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5711

As Reported by House Committee On:
Postsecondary Education & Workforce

Title: An act relating to extending the terms of eligibility for the Washington college grant program.

Brief Description: Extending the terms of eligibility for the Washington college grant program.

Sponsors: Senators Nobles, Lias, Frame, Hasegawa, Hunt, Lovelett, Nguyen, Pedersen, Saldaña, Shewmake, Valdez and Wilson, C.; by request of Student Achievement Council.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Postsecondary Education & Workforce: 3/10/23, 3/17/23 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Extends eligibility for the Washington College Grant from five years or 125 percent of the published length of the student's program to six years or 150 percent of the published length of the student's program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Slatter, Chair; Entenman, Vice Chair; Reed, Vice Chair; Ybarra, Ranking Minority Member; Waters, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hansen, Jacobsen, Klicker, Leavitt, McEntire, Paul, Schmidt and Timmons.

Staff: Saranda Ross (786-7068)

Background:

The Washington College Grant (WCG) is the state's largest financial aid program and

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provides grants to low-income students to pursue postsecondary education. The WCG is an entitlement program administered by the Washington Student Achievement Council with guaranteed grants for students who qualify. To qualify, a student must:

- demonstrate financial need;
- be a state resident;
- be enrolled at a Washington higher education institution or be enrolled in an approved, registered apprenticeship program;
- file a financial aid application; and
- not already have a bachelor's degree or higher.

The maximum WCG award covers tuition, and services and activities fees, for 15 quarter credits or the equivalent at the state's public institutions. A student is eligible to receive the WCG for five years or up to 125 percent of the published length of the student's program.

Summary of Bill:

A student is eligible to receive the WCG for six years or up to 150 percent of the published length of the student's program or the credit or clock-hour equivalent.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2023.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The WCG is one of the most generous financial aid programs on a state and federal level. This bill will align state and federal aid so students have access to both at the same time. This change will allow students to maximize their eligibility and give them the time and space they need to complete their programs. This bill is a modest expansion of the eligibility, as only about 5 percent of Washington College Grant recipients need more than four years to complete their degree. The Washington State Education Resource and Data Center states that one in 20 public, four-year university WCG recipients will extend their degree into a sixth year, and that two in three of those that go into a sixth year will finish their degree. This bill will provide life-changing opportunities to up to 6,000 students.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Yokiko Hayashi-Saguil, Jacob Katz, and Shannon Cosgrove, State Board of Community and Technical Colleges; Jacob Vigdor, University of Washington

Council of Faculty; Heather Hudson, Washington Student Achievement Council; Nathan Peters, Saint Martin's University; Mariela Delgadillo, Heritage University; and Puneet Birk, Associated Students of the University of Washington Bothell.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.