

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5666

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education & Workforce Development, February 17, 2023

Title: An act relating to a community or technical college student housing pilot program.

Brief Description: Establishing a community or technical college student housing pilot program.

Sponsors: Senators Randall, Trudeau, Hasegawa, Kuderer, Nguyen, Saldaña, Valdez and Wellman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/10/23, 2/17/23 [DP-WM].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a pilot program to provide subsidized housing or housing vouchers to Washington College Grant recipients at community or technical colleges.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Randall, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Member; Hawkins.

Staff: Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

Background: Tacoma Community College(TCC) launched the College Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) in 2014, in partnership with the Tacoma Housing Authority (THA). The partnership allowed homeless and near-homeless students to access housing

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vouchers and low-cost apartments subsidized by THA. In 2016 the CHAP model changed. THA started buying apartment complexes near the college and making arrangements with nearby landlords to subsidize housing prioritized for TCC students experiencing housing challenges.

The State Need Grant was modified in 2019, and renamed the Washington College Grant (WCG). The WCG is the state's largest financial aid program, and provides awards to low-income students to pursue postsecondary education. The WCG is an entitlement program with guaranteed awards for those students who qualify. The WCG award amount varies based on the institution the student attends and the student's family income.

Summary of Bill: The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) must administer a pilot program to provide planning grants to partnerships between community or technical colleges (CTC), and public housing authorities or nonprofit community organization to design and later administer a subsidized housing or housing voucher program for WCG eligible students. SBCTC shall select one or more partnerships to receive a planning grant. Priority must be given to partnerships that have previous experience administering a housing voucher or subsidized housing program. At a minimum, the pilot program must:

- be a partnership between a public housing authority or nonprofit community organization and a CTC;
- serve WCG eligible students;
- provide caseworker assistance to students seeking participation in the program; and
- prioritize opportunities which provide for a low cost of living.

Upon successful completion of a planning grant, a CTC in partnership with a public housing authority or nonprofit community organization may begin awarding housing vouchers or subsidized housing to eligible students.

A report is due to the Legislature by July 1, 2024, with information about the pilot program and partnerships selected to participate, design of the program, and lessons learned.

The pilot program is subject to appropriations and expires July 1, 2026.

Appropriation: The bill contains a section or sections to limit implementation to the availability of amounts appropriated for that specific purpose.

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: It is important to look at how students can be

supported and ensure they have the opportunities they need to thrive in school and after. The partnership between community and technical colleges, public housing authorities, and community organizations is the best bet to spend housing dollars most effectively. Washington students need the support this bill would offer. Thirteen percent of Washington students experience homelessness. Thirty-eight percent experience housing insecurity. Students need a home to go to and a place to sleep. This program is a smart approach. The field of subsidized college housing is nascent. Pilots and evaluations are needed to figure out what works best in each community. Housing students yields educational benefits, and improves student health, reducing their needs for expensive public healthcare support and reducing interactions with the criminal justice system.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Emily Randall, Prime Sponsor; Madeline Sprute, Associated Students Tacoma Community College; Sara Goldrick-Rab; Sopear Chay, South Puget Sound Community College.

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