
SECOND SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1559

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2023 Regular Session

By House Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Entenman, Fitzgibbon, Stonier, Paul, Riccelli, Bergquist, Pollet, and Leavitt)

READ FIRST TIME 02/24/23.

1 AN ACT Relating to the student basic needs at public
2 postsecondary institutions act; adding a new section to chapter
3 28B.10 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28B.50 RCW; creating new
4 sections; and providing an expiration date.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

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

1 pilot program. When students received this assistance, an average of
2 88 percent of them were able to persist in their programs.

3 Therefore, the legislature intends to continue to support
4 students and help students meet their basic needs by increasing
5 access to resources and support services.

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

8 (1) During the 2023-24 academic year, institutions of higher
9 education and the tribal college shall each establish a student basic
10 needs task force comprised of staff and faculty, student
11 representatives, and community organizations with expertise in
12 accessing basic needs. Each task force shall develop a hunger-free
13 and basic needs campus strategic plan beginning no later than April
14 1, 2024, and every other year thereafter. Each strategic plan must:

15 (a) By the beginning of the 2024-25 academic year and every other
16 year thereafter, collect and disseminate results of a student survey
17 developed by the student achievement council, in collaboration with
18 the state board for community and technical colleges and an
19 organization representing the presidents of the public four-year
20 institutions of higher education, to assess food security, housing
21 security, and access to basic economic supports that may be used by
22 the institutions of higher education and the tribal colleges.
23 Existing survey tool or tools may be used for this purpose;

24 (b) Be inclusive of, but is not limited to, both undergraduate
25 and graduate students;

26 (c) If none exists, design a benefits resource hub to assist
27 students with accessing public benefits, emergency financial
28 assistance such as those created under RCW 28B.50.295, and other
29 community resources utilizing one or more benefits navigators;

30 (d) Subject to appropriations, require each public four-year
31 institution and the tribal college have a minimum of one full-time
32 benefits navigator to assist students in accessing public benefits
33 and existing emergency assistance programs such as those funded by
34 RCW 28B.50.295;

35 (e) Identify campus food pantry policies that, in practice,
36 create barriers to access and reduce or remove those barriers in the
37 implementation of this subsection;

38 (f) Review and update methods to identify likely low-income and
39 food-insecure students and conduct communications and outreach

1 methods by the institution to promote opportunities for benefits
2 assistance (such as basic food enrollment, working connections child
3 care enrollment, referrals to the special supplemental nutrition
4 program for women, infants, and children, affordable housing
5 assistance) and emergency financial resources;

6 (g) Assess the needs and advantages of their benefits navigator
7 model;

8 (h) Identify opportunities for the institution and partnerships
9 with community-based organizations to holistically support students'
10 basic needs, access to benefits and community resources;

11 (i) Identify how many full-time benefits navigators are necessary
12 to adequately assist the institution's student population;

13 (j) Facilitate discussions and generate recommendations amongst
14 community stakeholders on the basic needs of the institution's
15 geographic postsecondary student population; and

16 (k) Assess the distribution of state funds for basic needs
17 support provided to institutions of higher education and tribal
18 colleges.

19 (2) Each strategic plan must include at least two proposed
20 activities to implement, based on data collected in the surveys.

21 (3) Institutions of higher education shall coordinate with an
22 organization representing the presidents of the public four-year
23 institutions to submit a report that must include the findings and
24 activities from their respective strategic plans, and provide
25 recommendations regarding strategies to address student basic needs.
26 The organization representing the presidents of the public four-year
27 institutions must submit the report by December 1, 2025, and every
28 other year thereafter, to the appropriate committees of the
29 legislature in accordance with RCW 43.01.036.

30 (4) The tribal college shall submit a report that must include
31 the findings and activities from its strategic plan and provide
32 recommendations regarding strategies to address student basic needs.
33 The tribal college must submit the report by December 1, 2025, and
34 every other year thereafter, to the appropriate committees of the
35 legislature in accordance with RCW 43.01.036.

36 (5) The student achievement council shall provide technical
37 assistance to the task force developed under this section.

38 (6) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this
39 section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

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

5 (b) "Benefits resource hub" means a single location on campus
6 where students are directed to get assistance from a benefits
7 navigator to understand what basic needs benefits they may be
8 eligible for and receive assistance in applications, enrollment, and
9 removing barriers to receive support services.

10 (c) "Institutions of higher education" means the state
11 universities, the regional universities, and The Evergreen State
12 College as defined in RCW 28B.10.016 (1) through (3), and university
13 campuses created under chapter 28B.45 RCW.

14 (d) "Student basic needs" means food, water, shelter, clothing,
15 physical health, mental health, child care, or similar needs that
16 students enrolled at an institution of higher education or tribal
17 college may face difficulty with and that hinders their ability to
18 begin or continue their enrollment.

19 (e) "Tribal colleges" means institutions of higher education
20 operated by an Indian tribe as defined in RCW 43.376.010.

21 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.50
22 RCW to read as follows:

23 (1) By the 2023-24 academic year, the college board shall
24 establish a student basic needs task force comprised of staff and
25 faculty, student representatives, and community organizations with
26 expertise in accessing basic needs. The task force shall develop a
27 hunger-free and basic needs strategic plan for community and
28 technical college districts beginning no later than April 1, 2024,
29 and every other year thereafter. The strategic plan must:

30 (a) By the beginning of the 2024-25 academic year and every year
31 thereafter, collect and disseminate results of the student survey
32 created under section 2(1)(a) of this act;

33 (b) If none exists, design benefits resource hubs at college
34 districts selected by the college board, to assist students with
35 accessing public benefits, emergency financial assistance such as
36 those created under RCW 28B.50.295, and other community resources
37 utilizing one or more benefits navigators;

1 (c) Subject to appropriations, hire full-time benefits navigators
2 to assist students in accessing public benefits and existing
3 emergency assistance programs such as those funded by RCW 28B.50.295;

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

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

14 (f) Assess the needs and advantages of the college board benefits
15 navigator model;

16 (g) Identify opportunities for the college board to partner with
17 community-based organizations to holistically support students' basic
18 needs, access to benefits, and community resources;

19 (h) Identify how many full-time benefits navigators are necessary
20 to adequately assist the student population of the college districts
21 selected in (b) of this subsection;

22 (i) Facilitate discussions and generate recommendations amongst
23 community stakeholders on the basic needs of the college districts'
24 geographic student population; and

25 (j) Assess the distribution of state funds for basic needs
26 support provided to college districts.

27 (2) The strategic plan must include at least two proposed
28 activities to implement based on data collected from the student
29 survey.

30 (3) The college board shall design and implement a benefits
31 navigator grant program to provide funding for benefits navigators as
32 established in subsection (1)(c) of this section. The college board
33 shall review applications for the benefits navigator grant program
34 and select college districts to receive the grant.

35 (4) College districts shall coordinate with the college board to
36 submit a report that must include the findings and activities from
37 the strategic plan and provide recommendations regarding strategies
38 to address student basic needs. The college board must submit the
39 report by December 1, 2025, and every other year thereafter, to the

1 appropriate committees of the legislature in accordance with RCW
2 43.01.036.

3 (5) The student achievement council shall provide technical
4 assistance to the task force developed under this section.

5 (6) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this
6 section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

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

11 (b) "Benefits resource hub" means a single location on campus
12 where students are directed to get assistance from a benefits
13 navigator to understand what basic needs benefits they may be
14 eligible for and receive assistance in applications, enrollment, and
15 removing barriers to receive support services.

16 (c) "Student basic needs" means food, water, shelter, clothing,
17 physical health, mental health, child care, or similar needs that
18 students enrolled at a college district may face difficulty with and
19 that hinders their ability to begin or continue their enrollment.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) Subject to the availability of amounts
21 appropriated for this specific purpose, a pilot program to provide
22 free and low-cost meal plans or food vouchers to eligible low-income
23 students is established at:

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

27 (b) Two public four-year institutions of higher education, one on
28 each side of the crest of the Cascade mountains, selected by an
29 organization representing the presidents of public four-year
30 institutions.

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

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

33 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** If specific funding for the purposes of
34 this act, referencing this act by bill or chapter number, is not
35 provided by June 30, 2023, in the omnibus appropriations act, this
36 act is null and void.

--- END ---