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**SENATE BILL 5785**

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**State of Washington 69th Legislature 2025 Regular Session**

**By** Senator Robinson

AN ACT Relating to modifying students' share of the education costs at institutions of higher education; amending RCW 28B.15.067; reenacting and amending RCW 28B.92.200 and 43.88C.010; adding a new section to chapter 28B.92 RCW; repealing RCW 28B.92.205; and providing effective dates.

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

**Sec.**  RCW 28B.15.067 and 2023 c 9 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Tuition fees shall be established under the provisions of this chapter.

(2)(a) The maximum increase in tuition operating fees for resident undergraduates at institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016((~~, excluding applied baccalaureate degrees as defined in RCW 28B.50.030,~~)) shall be calculated by the office of financial management and transmitted to the institutions of higher education by October 1st of each year for the following academic year. ((~~Tuition~~)) Except as provided in (b) and (c) of this subsection, tuition operating fees for resident undergraduates at institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016((~~, excluding applied baccalaureate degrees as defined in RCW 28B.50.030,~~)) may increase by no more than the average annual percentage growth rate in the median hourly wage for Washington as the wage is determined by the federal bureau of labor statistics and calculated based on the previous 14 years prior to the transmittal date by the office of financial management.

(b) In the 2026-27 academic year, the tuition operating fees for resident undergraduates at the community and technical colleges may increase by no more than five percent above the tuition growth factor calculated by the office of financial management in (a) of this subsection. Within the limitations of this subsection, tuition operating fees may only increase to the extent necessary to operate within the appropriations from the general fund and related funds, as defined in RCW 43.88.055, for fiscal year 2027 in the 2025-2027 omnibus operating appropriations act.

(c) In the 2026-27 academic year, the tuition operating fees for resident undergraduates at the state universities, regional universities, and The Evergreen State College may increase by no more than five percent above the tuition growth factor calculated by the office of financial management in (a) of this subsection. Within the limitations of this subsection, tuition operating fees may only increase to the extent necessary to support employee compensation costs and to operate within the appropriations from the general fund and related funds, as defined in RCW 43.88.055, for fiscal year 2027 in the 2025-2027 omnibus operating appropriations act.

(3) ((~~The~~)) (a) Except as provided in (b) and (c) of this subsection, the governing boards of the state universities, regional universities, and The Evergreen State College; and the state board for community and technical colleges may reduce or increase full-time tuition fees for all students other than resident undergraduates, including nonresident students, summer school students, and students in other self-supporting degree programs. Percentage increases in full-time tuition may exceed the fiscal growth factor. Except during the 2013-2015 fiscal biennium, the state board for community and technical colleges may pilot or institute differential tuition models. The board may define scale, scope, and rationale for the models.

(b) In the 2026-27 academic year, the tuition operating fees for nonresident undergraduates at the community and technical colleges may increase to the extent necessary to operate within the appropriations from the general fund and related funds, as defined in RCW 43.88.055, for fiscal year 2027 in the 2025-2027 omnibus operating appropriations act.

(c) In the 2026-27 academic year, the tuition operating fees for nonresident undergraduates at the state universities, regional universities, and The Evergreen State College may increase to the extent necessary to support employee compensation costs and to operate within the appropriations from the general fund and related funds, as defined in RCW 43.88.055, for fiscal year 2027 in the 2025-2027 omnibus operating appropriations act.

(4) The tuition fees established under this chapter shall not apply to high school students enrolling in participating institutions of higher education under RCW 28A.600.300 through 28A.600.400.

(5)(a) The tuition fees established under this chapter shall not apply to eligible students enrolling in a dropout reengagement program through an interlocal agreement between a school district and a community or technical college under RCW 28A.175.100 through 28A.175.110.

(b) The tuition fees established under this chapter shall not apply to students incarcerated with the department of corrections who are participating in credit-eligible postsecondary education courses and degree programs when the program expenses are funded by nontuition resources such as, but not limited to, grants, contracts, and donations.

(6) As a result of any changes in tuition under section 3, chapter 36, Laws of 2015 3rd sp. sess., the governing boards of the state universities, the regional universities, and The Evergreen State College shall not reduce resident undergraduate enrollment below the 2014-15 academic year levels.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28B.92 RCW to read as follows:

(1) In addition to other eligibility requirements outlined in this chapter, students whose annual household income is at or below 65 percent of the annual state median income are eligible to receive the Washington college grant. The amount a student may receive of the Washington college grant is dependent on the household's annual income, adjusted for household size, and the difference in the household's annual share of higher education costs provided in this section and the maximum Washington college grant. Beginning with academic year 2026-27, the office must calculate a household's annual share of higher education costs as follows:

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| If the household's annual income, adjusted for household size, is: | Then the household's annual share of higher education costs, based on a household of two, are: |
| Below 25 percent of the state median income | $0 |
| At or above 25 percent and below 35 percent of the state median income | 25 percent of the state median income for a household of two, multiplied by 5 percent |
| At or above 35 percent and below 45 percent of the state median income | 35 percent of the state median income for a household of two, multiplied by 5.5 percent |
| At or above 45 percent and below 55 percent of the state median income | 45 percent of the state median income for a household of two, multiplied by 6 percent |
| At or above 55 percent and at or below 65 percent of the state median income | 55 percent of the state median income for a household of two, multiplied by 6.5 percent |

(2) If the household's calculated share exceeds the maximum Washington college grant award, no award may be provided.

**Sec.**  RCW 28B.92.200 and 2024 c 323 s 1 and 2024 c 116 s 1 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

(1) The Washington college grant program is created to provide a statewide free college program for eligible participants and greater access to postsecondary education for Washington residents. The Washington college grant program is intended to increase the number of high school graduates and adults that can attain a postsecondary credential and provide them with the qualifications needed to compete for job opportunities in Washington.

(2) The office shall implement and administer the Washington college grant program and is authorized to establish rules necessary for implementation of the program.

(3) The legislature shall appropriate funding for the Washington college grant program. Allocations must be made on the basis of estimated eligible participants enrolled in eligible institutions of higher education or apprenticeship programs. All eligible students are entitled to a Washington college grant beginning in academic year 2020-21.

(4) The office shall award Washington college grants to all eligible students beginning in academic year 2020-21.

(5) To be eligible for the Washington college grant, students must meet the following requirements:

(a)(i) Demonstrate financial need ((~~under RCW 28B.92.205~~)) by establishing that their household income qualifies under section 2 of this act;

(ii) Receive one or more of the following types of public assistance:

(A) Aged, blind, or disabled assistance benefits under chapter 74.62 RCW;

(B) Essential needs and housing support program benefits under RCW 43.185C.220; or

(C) Pregnant women assistance program financial grants under RCW 74.62.030; ((~~or~~))

(iii) Be a Washington high school student in the 10th, 11th, or 12th grade whose parent or legal guardian is receiving one or more of the types of public assistance listed in (a)(ii) of this subsection and have received a certificate confirming eligibility from the office in accordance with RCW 28B.92.225; or

(iv) Beginning in the 2025-26 academic year, be a Washington high school student in the 10th, 11th, or 12th grade who is a member of an assistance unit receiving benefits under the Washington basic food program in chapter 74.04 RCW or the Washington food assistance program established under RCW 74.08A.120;

(b)(i) Be enrolled or accepted for enrollment for at least three quarter credits or the equivalent semester credits at an institution of higher education in Washington as defined in RCW 28B.92.030; or

(ii) Be enrolled in a registered apprenticeship program approved under chapter 49.04 RCW;

(c) Be a resident student as defined in RCW 28B.15.012(2) (a) through (e);

(d) File an annual application for financial aid as approved by the office; and

(e) Must not have earned a baccalaureate degree or higher from a postsecondary institution.

(6) Washington college grant eligibility may not extend beyond six years or 150 percent of the published length of the program in which the student is enrolled or the credit or clock-hour equivalent.

(7) Institutional aid administrators shall determine whether a student eligible for the Washington college grant in a given academic year may remain eligible for the ensuing year if the student's family income increases by no more than three percent.

(8) Qualifications for receipt and renewal include maintaining satisfactory academic progress toward completion of an eligible program as determined by the office and established in rule.

(9) Should a recipient terminate his or her enrollment for any reason during the academic year, the unused portion of the grant shall be returned to the state educational grant fund by the institution of higher education according to the institution of higher education's policy for issuing refunds, except as provided in RCW 28B.92.070.

(10) An eligible student enrolled on a part-time basis shall receive a prorated portion of the Washington college grant for any academic period in which he or she is enrolled on a part-time basis.

(11) The Washington college grant is intended to be used to meet the costs of postsecondary education for students with financial need. The student shall be awarded all need-based financial aid for which the student qualifies as determined by the institution.

(12) Students and participating institutions of higher education shall comply with all the rules adopted by the council for the administration of this chapter.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.88C.010 and 2023 c 420 s 4, 2023 c 345 s 1, and 2023 c 244 s 1 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

(1) The caseload forecast council is hereby created. The council shall consist of two individuals appointed by the governor and four individuals, one of whom is appointed by the chairperson of each of the two largest political caucuses in the senate and house of representatives. The chair of the council shall be selected from among the four caucus appointees. The council may select such other officers as the members deem necessary.

(2) The council shall employ a caseload forecast supervisor to supervise the preparation of all caseload forecasts. As used in this chapter, "supervisor" means the caseload forecast supervisor.

(3) Approval by an affirmative vote of at least five members of the council is required for any decisions regarding employment of the supervisor. Employment of the supervisor shall terminate after each term of three years. At the end of the first year of each three-year term the council shall consider extension of the supervisor's term by one year. The council may fix the compensation of the supervisor. The supervisor shall employ staff sufficient to accomplish the purposes of this section.

(4) The caseload forecast council shall oversee the preparation of and approve, by an affirmative vote of at least four members, the official state caseload forecasts prepared under RCW 43.88C.020. If the council is unable to approve a forecast before a date required in RCW 43.88C.020, the supervisor shall submit the forecast without approval and the forecast shall have the same effect as if approved by the council.

(5) A councilmember who does not cast an affirmative vote for approval of the official caseload forecast may request, and the supervisor shall provide, an alternative forecast based on assumptions specified by the member.

(6) Members of the caseload forecast council shall serve without additional compensation but shall be reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120 while attending sessions of the council or on official business authorized by the council. Nonlegislative members of the council shall be reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

(7) "Caseload," as used in this chapter, means:

(a) The number of persons expected to meet entitlement requirements and require the services of public assistance programs, state correctional institutions, state correctional noninstitutional supervision, state institutions for juvenile offenders, the common school system, long-term care, medical assistance, foster care, and adoption support;

(b) The number of students who are eligible for the Washington college bound scholarship program and are expected to attend an institution of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.92.030;

(c) The number of students who are eligible for the Washington college grant program under RCW 28B.92.200 and ((~~28B.92.205~~)) section 2 of this act and are expected to attend an institution of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.92.030;

(d) The number of children who are eligible, as defined in RCW 43.216.505, to participate in, and the number of children actually served by, the early childhood education and assistance program; and

(e) Beginning with the first official forecast after July 23, 2023, the number of people eligible for the working families' tax credit under RCW 82.08.0206. The total number of people eligible for the working families' tax credit should include:

(i) The number of eligible people with no qualifying children;

(ii) The number of eligible people with one qualifying child;

(iii) The number of eligible people with two qualifying children; and

(iv) The number of eligible people with three or more qualifying children.

(8) The caseload forecast council shall forecast the temporary assistance for needy families and the working connections child care programs as a courtesy.

(9) By January 1, 2023, the caseload forecast council shall present the number of individuals who are assessed as eligible for and have requested a service through the individual and family services waiver and the basic plus waiver administered by the developmental disabilities administration as a courtesy. The caseload forecast council shall be presented with the service request list as defined in RCW 71A.10.020 to aid in development of this information.

(10) Beginning with the official forecast submitted in November 2022 and subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the caseload forecast council shall forecast the number of individuals who are assessed as eligible for and have requested supported living services, a service through the core waiver, an individual and family services waiver, and the basic plus waiver administered by the developmental disabilities administration as a courtesy. The caseload forecast council shall be presented with the service request list as defined in RCW 71A.10.020 to aid in development of this information.

(11) As a courtesy, beginning with the official forecast submitted in November 2022, the caseload forecast council shall forecast the number of individuals who are expected to reside in state-operated living alternatives administered by the developmental disabilities administration.

(12) The caseload forecast council shall forecast youth participating in the extended foster care program pursuant to RCW 74.13.031 separately from other children who are residing in foster care and who are under eighteen years of age.

(13) The caseload forecast council shall forecast the number of youth expected to receive behavioral rehabilitation services while involved in the foster care system and the number of screened in reports of child abuse or neglect.

(14) The caseload forecast council shall forecast the number of individuals who are functionally and financially eligible for medicaid waiver services administered by the developmental disabilities administration who also meet the criteria outlined in RCW 71A.12.370 and are expected to utilize a medicaid waiver service.

(15) The caseload forecast council shall forecast eligible children participating in the transition to kindergarten program under RCW 28A.300.072.

(16) Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions provided in RCW 43.88.020 apply to this chapter.

(17) During the 2021-2023 fiscal biennium, and beginning with the November 2021 forecast, the caseload forecast council shall produce an unofficial forecast of the long-term caseload for juvenile rehabilitation as a courtesy.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  RCW 28B.92.205 (Washington college grant program—Financial need) and 2023 c 475 s 923, 2022 c 297 s 949, & 2019 c 406 s 20, as now existing or hereafter amended, are each repealed, effective September 1, 2026.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Sections 2 through 4 of this act take effect July 1, 2026.

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