

2SHB 1559 - S AMD 456
By Senator Randall

1 Strike everything after the enacting clause and insert the
2 following:

3 "NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** In 2022, students at 39 colleges and
4 universities across Washington state participated in a survey about
5 basic needs insecurities, including access to food, housing, child
6 care, and more. The survey found that nearly half of all students in
7 all regions of the state experienced some type of basic needs
8 insecurity. One in every three students experienced either food
9 insecurity or housing insecurity. One in every 10 students had also
10 experienced homelessness in the previous 12 months. Some students
11 experienced these insecurities at higher rates than others, and
12 former foster youth had the highest rates of basic needs insecurities
13 with 75 percent experiencing either food or housing insecurity.
14 Addressing basic needs challenges for students contributes to their
15 ability to remain enrolled and pursue their educational goals as
16 evidenced by data from the two student support programs the
17 legislature previously enacted, the student emergency assistance
18 grant program and the supporting students experiencing homelessness
19 pilot program. When students received this assistance, an average of
20 88 percent of them were able to persist in their programs.

21 Therefore, the legislature intends to continue to support
22 students and help students meet their basic needs by increasing
23 access to resources and support services.

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

26 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
27 specific purpose, each institution of higher education, the
28 university campuses created under chapter 28B.45 RCW, and the tribal
29 college must have a minimum of one benefits navigator employed at a
30 minimum .75 full-time equivalent rate, not to be divided between two
31 or more staff, to assist students in accessing public benefits,

1 existing emergency assistance programs such as those funded by RCW
2 28B.50.295, and other community resources. Each benefits navigator
3 must be stationed at a single location on campus where students are
4 directed to receive assistance. The institutions of higher education
5 and the tribal college, in coordination with the respective benefits
6 navigators, must each develop a hunger-free and basic needs campus
7 strategic plan by April 1, 2024. Each strategic plan must:

8 (a) Identify campus food pantry policies that, in practice,
9 create barriers to access and reduce or remove those barriers in the
10 implementation of this subsection;

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

18 (c) Assess the needs and advantages of the benefits navigators;

19 (d) Identify opportunities for the institution and partnerships
20 with community-based organizations to holistically support students'
21 basic needs, access to benefits and community resources;

22 (e) Facilitate discussions and generate recommendations amongst
23 community stakeholders on the basic needs of the institution's
24 geographic postsecondary student population; and

25 (f) Assess the distribution of state funds for basic needs
26 support provided to institutions of higher education and the tribal
27 college.

28 (2) By the beginning of the 2024-25 academic year, the Washington
29 student achievement council must collect and disseminate results of a
30 student survey developed by the student achievement council, in
31 collaboration with the state board for community and technical
32 colleges and an organization representing the presidents of the
33 public four-year institutions of higher education, to assess food
34 security, housing security, and access to basic economic supports.
35 Results from the survey may be used by the institutions of higher
36 education and the tribal college. Existing survey tools may be used
37 for this purpose.

38 (3) Public four-year institutions of higher education and their
39 respective university campuses shall coordinate with an organization
40 representing the presidents of the public four-year institutions to

1 submit a report that must include outcomes from implementation of
2 benefits navigators and findings and activities from their respective
3 hunger-free and basic needs campus strategic plans. The community and
4 technical colleges shall coordinate with the state board for
5 community and technical colleges to submit a report that must include
6 outcomes from implementation of benefits navigators and findings and
7 activities from their respective hunger-free and basic needs campus
8 strategic plans. The organizations representing the presidents of the
9 public four-year institutions and the state board for community and
10 technical colleges must submit the reports by December 1, 2025, and
11 every other year thereafter, to the appropriate committees of the
12 legislature in accordance with RCW 43.01.036.

13 (4) The tribal college shall submit a report that must include
14 the findings and activities from implementation of the benefits
15 navigator and findings and activities from the hunger-free and basic
16 needs campus strategic plan. The tribal college must submit the
17 report by December 1, 2025, and every other year thereafter, to the
18 appropriate committees of the legislature in accordance with RCW
19 43.01.036.

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

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

26 (b) "Institutions of higher education" has the same meaning as in
27 RCW 28B.10.016.

28 (c) "Student basic needs" means food, water, shelter, clothing,
29 physical health, mental health, child care, or similar needs that
30 students enrolled at an institution of higher education or tribal
31 college may face difficulty with and that hinders their ability to
32 begin or continue their enrollment.

33 (d) "Tribal colleges" means institutions of higher education
34 operated by an Indian tribe as defined in RCW 43.376.010.

35 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) Subject to the availability of amounts
36 appropriated for this specific purpose, a pilot program to provide
37 free and low-cost meal plans or food vouchers to eligible low-income
38 students is established at:

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

4 (b) Two public four-year institutions of higher education, one on
5 each side of the crest of the Cascade mountains, selected by an
6 organization representing the presidents of public four-year
7 institutions.

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

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

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** If specific funding for the purposes of
11 this act, referencing this act by bill or chapter number, is not
12 provided by June 30, 2023, in the omnibus appropriations act, this
13 act is null and void."

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14 On page 1, line 2 of the title, after "act;" strike the remainder
15 of the title and insert "adding a new section to chapter 28B.10 RCW;
16 creating new sections; and providing an expiration date."

EFFECT: (1) Eliminates the establishment of basic needs task
forces at the public four-year institutions, university campuses, and
state board.

(2) Specifies that each benefits navigator must be at least .75
FTE and requires that position be filled by a single individual.

(3) Requires basic needs strategic plans at each institution and
specifies activities that the institutions of higher education and
the tribal college, in coordination with benefits navigators, may
engage in.

(4) Requires the public four-year institutions and the university
campuses to collaborate on a report to the legislature regarding
outcomes from the implementation of benefits navigators and
activities from basic needs strategic plans. Requires the college
board to submit a report to the legislature on the outcomes from
benefits navigators and activities from basic needs strategic plans
on behalf of the CTCs.

(5) Eliminates the requirement that benefits hubs be established.

(6) Directs WSAC to administer and disseminate results from a
basic needs survey.

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