

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## 2SHB 1559

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### As Passed Legislature

**Title:** An act relating to the student basic needs at public postsecondary institutions act.

**Brief Description:** Establishing the student basic needs at public postsecondary institutions act.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Entenman, Fitzgibbon, Stonier, Paul, Riccelli, Bergquist, Pollet and Leavitt).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Postsecondary Education & Workforce: 1/31/23, 2/14/23 [DPS];  
Appropriations: 2/23/23, 2/24/23 [DP2S(w/o sub PEW)].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed House: 3/3/23, 57-40.  
Senate Amended.  
Passed Senate: 4/12/23, 29-20.  
House Refused to Concur.  
Senate Receded  
Senate Amended.  
Passed Senate: 4/20/23, 28-20.  
House Concurred.  
Passed House: 4/20/23, 55-40.  
Passed Legislature.

**Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill**

- Requires employment of a Benefits Navigator at each institution of higher education and the tribal college.
- Creates Hunger-Free and Basic Needs Campus Strategic Plans.
- Creates a student basic needs survey.
- Enacts the Free and Reduced-Price Meals Pilot Program.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

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## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Slatter, Chair; Entenman, Vice Chair; Reed, Vice Chair; Hansen, Leavitt, Paul, Pollet and Timmons.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Ybarra, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Jacobsen, Klicker and McEntire.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Waters, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Schmidt.

**Staff:** Saranda Ross (786-7068)

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## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

**Majority Report:** The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Postsecondary Education & Workforce. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Berg, Chopp, Davis, Fitzgibbon, Lekanoff, Pollet, Riccelli, Ryu, Senn, Simmons, Slatter, Springer, Stonier and Tharinger.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Stokesbary, Ranking Minority Member; Chambers, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Corry, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Connors, Couture, Dye, Harris, Rude, Sandlin, Schmick and Steele.

**Staff:** Kate Henry (786-7349).

### **Background:**

Several community and technical colleges provide a range of on-campus resource services. Lower Columbia College's One-Stop Center offers students general information and connection with resources. Edmonds College has a Center for Student Cultural Diversity and Inclusion, which provides emergency resources. South Puget Sound Community College's Personal Support Center offers assistance with food, connection to housing and basic needs support, and on-campus childcare and parent support classes.

United Way of King County provides Benefits Hubs to nine community and technical colleges in King County: Bellevue College, Cascadia College, Highline College, Green River College, North Seattle College, Renton Technical College, Seattle Central College, Shoreline Community College, and South Seattle College; and one baccalaureate institution, University of Washington Bothell. The Benefits Hubs offer a variety of services such as

financial coaching, basic needs access, food security, and emergency grant help.

In addition to University of Washington Bothell, there are several baccalaureate institutions that offer similar campus benefits resource hubs or services. The Evergreen State College has a Basic Needs Advocacy and Resource Center that provides navigation support for public benefits, housing, and basic needs. The University of Washington Tacoma has an Office of Student Advocacy and Support offering extensive assessment, case management, and resource connections. Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, Western Washington University, and Washington State University do not offer a centralized, physical resource hub, but do provide case management and access to resources and referrals, such as food pantries.

### **Summary of Second Substitute Bill:**

A Benefits Navigator helps students seek, apply for, and receive assistance from benefits programs, emergency resources, and community resources. Subject to appropriations, institutions of higher education and the tribal college must each employ at least one Benefits Navigator, to be employed at a minimum of .75 FTE and filled by a single individual. Each Benefits navigator must be stationed at a single location on campus where students are directed to receive assistance.

Student basic needs are food, water, shelter, clothing, physical health, mental health, childcare, or similar needs that students enrolled at an institution of higher education, tribal college, or community or technical college may face difficulty with, and that hinders their ability to begin or continue their enrollment. The institutions of higher education and the tribal college, in coordination with their respective Benefits Navigators, must each develop a Hunger-Free and Basic Needs Campus Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) by April 1, 2024.

Each Strategic Plan must:

- reduce or remove barriers to accessing campus food pantries;
- conduct outreach targeted at likely low-income and food-insecure students by promoting opportunities for benefits assistance and emergency financial resources;
- identify opportunities for partnerships with community-based organizations;
- assess the needs and advantages of the Benefits Navigators;
- facilitate discussions amongst community stakeholders on student basic needs; and
- assess the distribution of state funds for basic needs support.

Outcomes from the Benefits Navigators and findings and activities from each Strategic Plan must be reported to the Legislature by December 1, 2025, and every other year thereafter.

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) must collaborate with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (State Board) and an organization representing the presidents of the public four-year institutions of higher education to develop a student survey assessing food security, housing security, and access to basic

economic supports. The WSAC must collect and disseminate the results of this survey, which may be used by institutions of higher education and the tribal college.

Subject to appropriations, an organization representing the presidents of the public four-year institutions of higher education and the State Board must select two public four-year institutions of higher education and four community and technical college districts, respectively, to participate in a pilot program that provides free and low-cost meal plans or food vouchers to eligible low-income students.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Postsecondary Education & Workforce):**

(In support) Washington students' basic needs are not being met. People make the choice to go to college because it is a path to independence. This bill will help students stay in school while meeting their basic needs.

This bill creates opportunities for campuses to identify what students need to fulfill their full potential. All students who use existing campus food banks are low income and half are students of color. Students drop out because they are forced to deprioritize education to survive. For example, students have to spend hours working instead of studying, or spend money on food rather than school supplies. College success is not just good grades, it is also good health.

A recent study by the Washington Student Achievement Council found that over 70 percent of students did not use a campus resource to support their needs. This bill would help students identify the resources available to them. While many students already receive grants, scholarships, and access to food pantries, it is not enough. Student meal plans run out by the last month of the quarter, so students turn to food pantries. What is offered there often does not meet nutritional needs, especially for those students who have dietary restrictions. These pantries are underfunded and increasingly serve staff as well as students. Some on-campus pantries only operate once a month due to funding limitations and community pantries are operating beyond their capacity. Transportation to outside food pantries, literacy, and lack of childcare are also barriers. Further, it can be difficult to keep a state Electronic Benefits Transfer card because students have to work 29 hours a week to remain eligible. Students need outreach and education to know what they are eligible for and what is available both on and off campus.

For students to access resources, they have to go to multiple departments and thus have to

retell their stories. The process to obtain resources should be trauma-informed and streamlined to reduce the negative impact on mental health.

(Opposed) None.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Appropriations):**

(In support) Half of all students report experiencing basic needs insecurities during their postsecondary education career. Overall, cost is the largest barrier to higher education. Students in college are hardworking, but often experience insecurities regarding how to pay for food, housing, medical costs, and child care. If student needs are met, then students will graduate at a higher rate.

Now is a critical time to address student needs. Benefit navigators are a proven model around the country to leverage federal funds and address the crisis of basic needs. This bill will increase the number of students able to take advantage of basic needs assistance. Coordinating eligibility through benefit navigators will allow for students to have one less burden.

Community and technical college data states that those students who are able to take advantage of basic needs assistance, more than 85 percent complete the following quarter. Those students able to take advantage of basic needs assistance also are employed at a higher rate upon graduation.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying (Postsecondary Education & Workforce):** Representative Debra Entenman, prime sponsor; Joseph Gabriel Burke, Washington Student Association; Alex Hur, Northwest Education Access; Madeline Sprute and Martell Naranjo, Tacoma Community College; Jaeda Nelson, Wildcat Pantry, Central Washington University; Sybil Jordan; Michelle Carrillo; Joel Anderson, University of Washington Graduate and Professional Student Senate; Sopena Chay and Eden McDade, South Puget Sound Community College; Nora Selander, Western Washington University; Sandy Kaiser, The Evergreen State College; Emily Portillo, United Way of King County; Candice Wheeler; Jackson Feaster; Ted Topper; Jacob Katz and Jennifer Dellinger, State Board of Community and Technical Colleges; Alex Davidson, The Associated Students of the University of Washington; Zachary Glenn, University of Washington; Hannah Whobrey, University of Washington Food Pantry; and Yadira Chavez, Community for Our Colleges.

**Persons Testifying (Appropriations):** Bryce McKibben, The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice; Joseph-Gabriel Burke, Washington Student Association; Collin Bannister, Associated Students of Washington State University Pullman; Jennifer Dellinger, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; and Nora Selander, Western Washington University.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Postsecondary Education & Workforce):** None.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Appropriations):** None.