HOUSE BILL 2955

State of Washington   **64th Legislature**   **2016 Regular Session**

By Representative Hansen

1   AN ACT Relating to creating the Washington free to finish college
2 program; amending RCW 28B.76.540; adding a new chapter to Title 28B
3 RCW; and providing an expiration date.

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

5   NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that the cost of
6 higher education is often a barrier for students and recognizes that
7 in order to meet the legislature's educational attainment goal of
8 having at least seventy percent of Washington adults obtain a
9 postsecondary credential by 2023, more needs to be done to encourage
10 Washingtonians to go back to college. Therefore, it is the intent of
11 the legislature to make college free for any resident who attended a
12 postsecondary education degree or certificate program and left with
13 fifteen quarter or semester credits left or less and was not enrolled
14 in an institution of higher education the prior quarter or semester,
15 to return to complete his or her program of study.

16   NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The definitions in this section apply
17 throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires
18 otherwise.
19   (1) "Gift aid" means financial aid received from the federal Pell
20 grant, the state need grant program under chapter 28B.92 RCW, the

college bound scholarship program under chapter 28B.118 RCW, the
opportunity grant program under chapter 28B.50 RCW, the opportunity
scholarship program under chapter 28B.145 RCW, or any other state
grant or scholarship program that provides funds for educational
purposes with no obligation of repayment. Student loans and work
study programs are not "gift aid."

(2) "Office" means the office of student financial assistance, as
established under chapter 28B.76 RCW.

(3) "Program" means the Washington free to finish college program
created in this chapter.

NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) The Washington free to finish college
program is established to encourage Washington residents who attended
a postsecondary education degree or certificate program, but were
unable to graduate and are no longer enrolled in a postsecondary
education degree or certificate program, to return to an institution
of higher education to complete their program of study. To be
eligible for the program, a student needs to:

(a) Be a resident of the state, as defined in RCW 28B.15.012(2)
(a) through (e);

(b) Not previously have earned a postsecondary degree or
certificate;

(c) Have not been enrolled at an institution of higher education
the prior quarter or semester;

(d) Have no more than fifteen quarter credits or fifteen semester
credits remaining in his or her program of study; and

(e) Submit the free application for federal student aid (FAFSA)
or the Washington application for state financial aid.

(2) The program shall be administered by the office, which may
adopt rules necessary to administer the program.

(3) Subject to the availability of funding, the office shall
award grants to students who meet the criteria in subsection (1) of
this section for an amount equal to the cost of tuition and fees as
defined in RCW 28B.15.020 and services and activities fees as defined
in RCW 28B.15.041, less any gift aid received.

(4) The program shall not result in a reduction of any federal or
state gift aid.

NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** By December 1, 2017, and every December
1st thereafter, the office shall report to the appropriate policy and

1 fiscal committees of the legislature regarding the impact of the
2 program, including:
3   (1) The number of applicants;
4   (2) The number of students served;
5   (3) Program costs;
6   (4) Participant demographics;
7   (5) Enrollment status, meaning part time versus full time;
8   (6) Field of study; and
9   (7) Any other information deemed relevant.

10   NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** (1) The office shall contract with a third
11 party to complete an evaluation of the program. The evaluation must
12 address the impacts and cost of the program, and it must include an
13 assessment of student support services provided to students who
14 qualify for the program, including whether the student support
15 services are considered effective at helping students succeed at
16 college. A report on the evaluation is due to the appropriate policy
17 and fiscal committees of the legislature by November 1, 2020.
18   (2) This section expires August 1, 2021.

19   **Sec. 6.** RCW 28B.76.540 and 2011 1st sp.s. c 11 s 111 are each
20 amended to read as follows:
21   In addition to administrative responsibilities assigned in this
22 chapter, the office shall administer the programs set forth in the
23 following statutes: RCW 28A.600.100 through 28A.600.150 (Washington
24 scholars); chapter 28B.85 RCW (degree-granting institutions); chapter
25 28B.92 RCW (state need grant); chapter 28B.12 RCW (work-study); RCW
26 28B.15.543 (tuition waivers for Washington scholars); RCW 28B.15.760
27 through 28B.15.766 (math and science loans); RCW 28B.15.100
28 (reciprocity agreement); RCW 28B.15.730 through 28B.15.734 (Oregon
29 reciprocity); RCW 28B.15.750 and 28B.15.752 (Idaho reciprocity); RCW
30 28B.15.756 (British Columbia reciprocity); chapter 28B.101 RCW
31 (educational opportunity grant); chapter 28B.102 RCW (future teachers
32 conditional scholarship); chapter 28B.108 RCW (American Indian
33 endowed scholarship); chapter 28B.109 RCW (Washington international
34 exchange scholarship); chapter 28B.115 RCW (health professional
35 conditional scholarship); chapter 28B.119 RCW (Washington promise
36 scholarship); chapter 28B.--- RCW (the new chapter created in section
37 7 of this act)(Washington free to finish college program); and

1 chapter 28B.133 RCW (gaining independence for students with
2 dependents).

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** Sections 1 through 5 of this act
4 constitute a new chapter in Title 28B RCW.

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