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**SENATE BILL 5896**

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**State of Washington**

**68th Legislature**

**2024 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Nobles and Hansen

Prefiled 12/21/23.

1 AN ACT Relating to extending the terms of eligibility for the  
2 Washington college grant program, Washington college bound  
3 scholarship program, passport to college promise program, and  
4 passport to apprenticeship opportunities program; and amending RCW  
5 28B.92.200, 28B.118.010, 28B.118.005, and 28B.117.030.

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

7 **Sec. 1.** RCW 28B.92.200 and 2022 c 214 s 5 are each amended to  
8 read as follows:

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

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

19 (3) The legislature shall appropriate funding for the Washington  
20 college grant program. Allocations must be made on the basis of  
21 estimated eligible participants enrolled in eligible institutions of

1 higher education or apprenticeship programs. All eligible students  
2 are entitled to a Washington college grant beginning in academic year  
3 2020-21.

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

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

8 (a) (i) Demonstrate financial need under RCW 28B.92.205;

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

10 (A) Aged, blind, or disabled assistance benefits under chapter  
11 74.62 RCW;

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

14 (C) Pregnant women assistance program financial grants under RCW  
15 74.62.030; or

16 (iii) Be a Washington high school student in the 10th, 11th, or  
17 12th grade whose parent or legal guardian is receiving one of the  
18 types of public assistance listed in (a) (ii) of this subsection and  
19 have received a certificate confirming eligibility from the office in  
20 accordance with RCW 28B.92.225;

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

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

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

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

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

32 (6) Washington college grant eligibility may not extend beyond  
33 ((~~five~~)) six years or ((~~one hundred twenty-five~~)) 150 percent of the  
34 published length of the program in which the student is enrolled or  
35 the credit or clock-hour equivalent.

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 **Sec. 2.** RCW 28B.118.010 and 2023 c 174 s 2 are each amended to  
21 read as follows:

22 The office of student financial assistance shall design the  
23 Washington college bound scholarship program in accordance with this  
24 section and in alignment with the Washington college grant program in  
25 chapter 28B.92 RCW unless otherwise provided in this section. The  
26 right of an eligible student to receive a college bound scholarship  
27 vest upon enrollment in the program that is earned by meeting the  
28 requirements of this section as it exists at the time of the  
29 student's enrollment under subsection (2) of this section.

30 (1) "Eligible students" are those students who:

31 (a) Qualify for free or reduced-price lunches.

32 (i) If a student qualifies in the seventh or eighth grade, the  
33 student remains eligible even if the student does not receive free or  
34 reduced-price lunches thereafter.

35 (ii) Beginning in the 2019-20 academic year, if a student  
36 qualifies for free or reduced-price lunches in the ninth grade and  
37 was previously ineligible during the seventh or eighth grade while he  
38 or she was a student in Washington, the student is eligible for the  
39 college bound scholarship program;

1 (b) Are dependent pursuant to chapter 13.34 RCW and:

2 (i) In grade seven through 12; or

3 (ii) Are between the ages of 18 and 21 and have not graduated  
4 from high school; or

5 (c) Were dependent pursuant to chapter 13.34 RCW and were adopted  
6 between the ages of 14 and 18 with a negotiated adoption agreement  
7 that includes continued eligibility for the Washington state college  
8 bound scholarship program pursuant to RCW 74.13A.025.

9 (2)(a) Every eligible student shall be automatically enrolled by  
10 the office of student financial assistance, with no action necessary  
11 by the student, student's family, or student's guardians.

12 (b) Eligible students and the students' parents or guardians  
13 shall be notified of the student's enrollment in the Washington  
14 college bound scholarship program and the requirements for award of  
15 the scholarship by the office of student financial assistance. To the  
16 maximum extent practicable, an eligible student must acknowledge  
17 enrollment in the college bound scholarship program and receipt of  
18 the requirements for award of the scholarship.

19 (c) The office of the superintendent of public instruction and  
20 the department of children, youth, and families must provide the  
21 office of student financial assistance with a list of eligible  
22 students when requested. The office of student financial assistance  
23 must determine the most effective methods, including timing and  
24 frequency, to notify eligible students of enrollment in the  
25 Washington college bound scholarship program. The office of student  
26 financial assistance must take reasonable steps to ensure that  
27 eligible students acknowledge enrollment in the college bound  
28 scholarship program and receipt of the requirements for award of the  
29 scholarship. The office of student financial assistance shall also  
30 make available to every school district information, brochures, and  
31 posters to increase awareness and to enable school districts to  
32 notify eligible students directly or through school teachers,  
33 counselors, or school activities.

34 (3) Except as provided in subsection (4) of this section, an  
35 eligible student must:

36 (a)(i) Graduate from a public high school under RCW 28A.150.010,  
37 an approved private high school under chapter 28A.195 RCW in  
38 Washington, or have received home-based instruction under chapter  
39 28A.200 RCW; and

1 (ii) For eligible students enrolling in a postsecondary  
2 educational institution for the first time beginning with the 2023-24  
3 academic year, graduate with at least a "C" average for consideration  
4 of direct admission to a public or private four-year institution of  
5 higher education;

6 (b) Have no felony convictions;

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

9 (d) Have a family income that does not exceed 65 percent of the  
10 state median family income at the time of high school graduation.

11 (4)(a) An eligible student who is a resident student under RCW  
12 28B.15.012(2)(e) must also provide the institution, as defined in RCW  
13 28B.15.012, an affidavit indicating that the individual will file an  
14 application to become a permanent resident at the earliest  
15 opportunity the individual is eligible to do so and a willingness to  
16 engage in any other activities necessary to acquire citizenship,  
17 including but not limited to citizenship or civics review courses.

18 (b) For eligible students as defined in subsection (1)(b) and (c)  
19 of this section, a student may also meet the requirement in  
20 subsection (3)(a) of this section by receiving a high school  
21 equivalency certificate as provided in RCW 28B.50.536.

22 (5)(a) For students attending two or four-year institutions of  
23 higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, the value of the award  
24 shall be (i) the difference between the student's tuition and  
25 required fees, less the value of any state-funded grant, scholarship,  
26 or waiver assistance the student receives; (ii) plus five hundred  
27 dollars for books and materials.

28 (b) For students attending private four-year institutions of  
29 higher education in Washington, the award amount shall be the  
30 representative average of awards granted to students in public  
31 research universities in Washington or the representative average of  
32 awards granted to students in public research universities in  
33 Washington in the 2014-15 academic year, whichever is greater.

34 (c) For students attending private vocational schools in  
35 Washington, the award amount shall be the representative average of  
36 awards granted to students in public community and technical colleges  
37 in Washington or the representative average of awards granted to  
38 students in public community and technical colleges in Washington in  
39 the 2014-15 academic year, whichever is greater.

1 (6) Eligible students must enroll no later than the fall term, as  
2 defined by the institution of higher education, one academic year  
3 following high school graduation. (~~Eligible students may receive no~~  
4 ~~more than four full-time years' worth of scholarship awards within a~~  
5 ~~five-year period~~) College bound scholarship eligibility may not  
6 extend beyond six years or 150 percent of the published length of the  
7 program in which the student is enrolled or the credit or clock-hour  
8 equivalent.

9 (7) Institutions of higher education shall award the student all  
10 need-based and merit-based financial aid for which the student would  
11 otherwise qualify. The Washington college bound scholarship is  
12 intended to replace unmet need, loans, and, at the student's option,  
13 work-study award before any other grants or scholarships are reduced.

14 (8) The first scholarships shall be awarded to students  
15 graduating in 2012.

16 (9) The eligible student has a property right in the award, but  
17 the state of Washington retains legal ownership of tuition units  
18 awarded as scholarships under this chapter until the tuition units  
19 are redeemed. These tuition units shall remain separately held from  
20 any tuition units owned under chapter 28B.95 RCW by a Washington  
21 college bound scholarship recipient.

22 (~~(10) (The scholarship award must be used within five years of~~  
23 ~~receipt. Any unused scholarship tuition units revert to the~~  
24 ~~Washington college bound scholarship account.~~

25 ~~(11))~~) Should the recipient terminate his or her enrollment for  
26 any reason during the academic year, the unused portion of the  
27 scholarship tuition units shall revert to the Washington college  
28 bound scholarship account.

29 **Sec. 3.** RCW 28B.118.005 and 2007 c 405 s 1 are each amended to  
30 read as follows:

31 The legislature intends to inspire and encourage all Washington  
32 students to dream big by creating a guaranteed (~~four-year~~) tuition  
33 scholarship program for students from low-income families who enroll  
34 within one year of high school graduation. The legislature finds  
35 that, too often, financial barriers prevent many of the brightest  
36 students from considering college as a future possibility. Often the  
37 cost of tuition coupled with the complexity of finding and applying  
38 for financial aid is enough to prevent a student from even applying  
39 to college. Many students become disconnected from the education

1 system early on and may give up or drop out before graduation. It is  
2 the intent of the legislature to alert students early in their  
3 educational career to the options and opportunities available beyond  
4 high school.

5 **Sec. 4.** RCW 28B.117.030 and 2019 c 470 s 23 are each amended to  
6 read as follows:

7 (1) The office shall design and, to the extent funds are  
8 appropriated for this purpose, implement, passport to careers with  
9 two programmatic pathways: The passport to college promise program  
10 and the passport to apprenticeship opportunities program. Both  
11 programs offer supplemental scholarship and student assistance for  
12 students who were under the care of the state foster care system,  
13 tribal foster care system, or federal foster care system, and  
14 verified unaccompanied youth or young adults who have experienced  
15 homelessness.

16 (2) The office shall convene and consult with an advisory  
17 committee to assist with program design and implementation. The  
18 committee shall include but not be limited to former foster care and  
19 unaccompanied homeless youth and their advocates; representatives  
20 from the state board for community and technical colleges, public and  
21 private agencies that assist current and former foster care  
22 recipients and unaccompanied youth or young adults experiencing  
23 homelessness in their transition to adulthood; student support  
24 specialists from public and private colleges and universities; the  
25 state workforce training and education coordinating board; the  
26 employment security department; and the state apprenticeship council.

27 (3) To the extent that sufficient funds have been appropriated  
28 for this purpose, a student is eligible for assistance under this  
29 section if he or she:

30 (a)(i) Was in the care of the state foster care system, tribal  
31 foster care system, or federal foster care system in Washington state  
32 at any time before age twenty-one subsequent to the following:

33 (A) Age fifteen as of July 1, 2018;

34 (B) Age fourteen as of July 1, 2019; and

35 (C) Age thirteen as of July 1, 2020; or

36 (ii) Beginning July 1, 2019, was verified on or after July 1st of  
37 the prior academic year as an unaccompanied youth experiencing  
38 homelessness, before age twenty-one;

1 (b) Is a resident student, as defined in RCW 28B.15.012(2), or if  
2 unable to establish residency because of homelessness or placement in  
3 out-of-state foster care under the interstate compact for the  
4 placement of children, has residency determined through verification  
5 by the office;

6 (c) Is enrolled with or will enroll on at least a half-time basis  
7 with an institution of higher education or a registered  
8 apprenticeship or recognized preapprenticeship in Washington state by  
9 the age of twenty-one;

10 (d) Is making satisfactory academic progress toward the  
11 completion of a degree, certificate program, or registered  
12 apprenticeship or recognized preapprenticeship, if receiving  
13 supplemental scholarship assistance;

14 (e) Has not earned a bachelor's or professional degree; and

15 (f) Is not pursuing a degree in theology.

16 (4) The office shall define a process for verifying unaccompanied  
17 homeless status for determining eligibility under subsection  
18 (3)(a)(ii) of this section. The office may use a letter from the  
19 following persons or entities to provide verification: A high school  
20 or school district McKinney-Vento liaison; the director or designated  
21 staff member of an emergency shelter, transitional housing program,  
22 or homeless youth drop-in center; or other similar professional case  
23 manager or school employee. Students who have no formal connection  
24 with such a professional may also submit to the office an essay that  
25 describes their experience with homelessness and the barriers it  
26 created to their academic progress. The office may consider this  
27 essay in lieu of a letter of homelessness determination and may  
28 interview the student if further information is needed to verify  
29 eligibility.

30 (5) A passport to college promise program is created.

31 (a) A passport to college promise scholarship under this section:

32 (i) Shall not exceed resident undergraduate tuition and fees at  
33 the highest-priced public institution of higher education in the  
34 state; and

35 (ii) Shall not exceed the student's financial need, when combined  
36 with all other public and private grant, scholarship, and waiver  
37 assistance the student receives.

38 (b) (~~An eligible student may receive a passport~~) Passport to  
39 college promise scholarship (~~under this section for a maximum of~~  
40 ~~five years after the student first enrolls with an institution of~~



1 ~~higher education or until the student turns age twenty-six, whichever~~  
2 ~~occurs first. If a student turns age twenty-six during an academic~~  
3 ~~year, and would otherwise be eligible for a scholarship under this~~  
4 ~~section, the student shall continue to be eligible for a scholarship~~  
5 ~~for the remainder of the academic year)) eligibility may not extend~~  
6 ~~beyond six years or 150 percent of the published length of the~~  
7 ~~program in which the student is enrolled or the credit or clock-hour~~  
8 ~~equivalent.~~

9 (c) The office, in consultation with and with assistance from the  
10 state board for community and technical colleges, shall perform an  
11 annual analysis to verify that those institutions of higher education  
12 at which students have received a scholarship under this section have  
13 awarded the student all available need-based and merit-based grant  
14 and scholarship aid for which the student qualifies.

15 (d) In designing and implementing the passport to college promise  
16 student support program under this section, the office, in  
17 consultation with and with assistance from the state board for  
18 community and technical colleges, shall ensure that a participating  
19 college or university:

20 (i) Has a viable plan for identifying students eligible for  
21 assistance under this section, for tracking and enhancing their  
22 academic progress, for addressing their unique needs for assistance  
23 during school vacations and academic interims, and for linking them  
24 to appropriate sources of assistance in their transition to  
25 adulthood;

26 (ii) Receives financial and other incentives for achieving  
27 measurable progress in the recruitment, retention, and graduation of  
28 eligible students.

29 (e) To the extent funds are appropriated for this specific  
30 purpose, the office shall contract with at least one nongovernmental  
31 entity to provide services to support effective program  
32 implementation, resulting in increased postsecondary completion rates  
33 for passport scholars.

34 (6) The passport to apprenticeship opportunities program is  
35 created. The office shall:

36 (a) Identify students and applicants who are eligible for  
37 services under RCW 28B.117.030 through coordination of certain  
38 agencies as detailed in RCW 28B.117.040;

39 (b) Provide financial assistance through the nongovernmental  
40 entity or entities in RCW 28B.117.055 for registered apprenticeship

1 and recognized preapprenticeship entrance requirements and  
2 occupational-specific costs that does not exceed the individual's  
3 financial need; and

4 (c) Extend financial assistance to any eligible applicant for ((a  
5 maximum of)) six years ((after first enrolling with a registered  
6 apprenticeship or recognized preapprenticeship, or until the  
7 applicant turns twenty-six, whichever occurs first)) or 150 percent  
8 of the published length of the program in which the student is  
9 enrolled or the credit or clock-hour equivalent.

10 (7) Recipients may utilize passport to college promise or  
11 passport to apprenticeship opportunities at different times, but not  
12 concurrently. The total award an individual may receive in any  
13 combination of the programs shall not exceed the equivalent amount  
14 that would have been awarded for the individual to attend a public  
15 university for ((five)) six years with the highest annual tuition and  
16 state-mandated fees in the state.

17 (8) Personally identifiable information shared pursuant to this  
18 section retains its confidentiality and may not be further disclosed  
19 except as allowed under state and federal law.

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