
SENATE BILL 6141

State of Washington

66th Legislature

2020 Regular Session

By Senators Randall, Hasegawa, Keiser, Stanford, Frockt, Wilson, C., and Sheldon; by request of Lieutenant Governor

Prefiled 01/07/20. Read first time 01/13/20. Referred to Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development.

1 AN ACT Relating to expanding access to higher education; adding
2 new sections to chapter 28B.77 RCW; adding a new section to chapter
3 28A.230 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28A.300 RCW; and
4 creating a new section.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature recognizes the increasing
7 importance of postsecondary education as a tool for economic
8 resilience and mobility, as well as the financial barriers many
9 students in our state face in pursuing postsecondary education. The
10 legislature also acknowledges Washington's low completion rate of the
11 free application for federal student aid in comparison with other
12 states, as well as other states' successes in increasing these rates
13 by expanding supports for students and their families. Research has
14 shown that increased completion of student aid applications in other
15 states has led to increases in high school graduation and college
16 matriculation, especially for students in underrepresented groups. In
17 light of the 2019 expansion of the Washington college grant, it is
18 also important to share information about new financial aid
19 opportunities available to prospective postsecondary students. Given
20 these facts, the legislature intends to undertake several actions to
21 improve financial aid awareness and to increase coordination in this

1 area among schools, districts, agencies, and institutions of higher
2 education.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.77
4 RCW to read as follows:

5 (1) The council shall develop a centralized online statewide
6 calculator tool for the purposes of estimating combined financial aid
7 packages from the federal Pell grant and the Washington college grant
8 program for all public four-year institutions of higher education in
9 Washington state.

10 (2) The tool must provide a financial aid estimate based on the
11 income of a student's parents or guardians and any expected family
12 contribution.

13 (3) All public four-year institutions of higher education shall
14 post this calculator on their respective web sites.

15 (4) The financial aid calculator must be for estimation purposes
16 only and is not a guarantee of state aid. Neither this section nor
17 the estimates provided by the financial aid calculator constitute an
18 entitlement on the part of the state, and no institution, agency, or
19 their agents or employees may be held liable for any estimates
20 created through its usage.

21 (5) The financial aid calculator must be designed for anonymous
22 use and may not be used to collect or share any data whatsoever.

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.77
24 RCW to read as follows:

25 (1) In collaboration with the council of presidents, the
26 Washington student achievement council shall develop clear,
27 consistent standards for institutions of higher education to adopt
28 regarding financial aid package award letters.

29 (2) By July 1, 2021, all public four-year and two-year
30 institutions of higher education, as well as all independent colleges
31 in Washington state, must adopt uniform terminology and a
32 standardized template for financial aid award packages so that
33 students may easily compare them.

34 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.230
35 RCW to read as follows:

36 (1) Beginning with the 2020-21 school year, in coordination with
37 the office of the superintendent of public instruction and the

1 Washington student achievement council, all school districts with a
2 high school must provide a financial aid advising day, as defined in
3 section 5 of this act.

4 (2) The office of the superintendent of public instruction may
5 adopt rules for the implementation of this section.

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.300
7 RCW to read as follows:

8 (1)(a) Beginning with the 2020-21 school year and within existing
9 resources, the office of the superintendent of public instruction
10 shall coordinate and facilitate a financial aid advising day with all
11 school districts with a high school.

12 (b) For the purposes of this section and section 4 of this act, a
13 "financial aid advising day" means a day or series of days in
14 September that includes, but is not limited to, dedicated time during
15 regular school hours for staff to:

16 (i) Provide information to twelfth grade students on the free
17 application for federal student aid and the Washington application
18 for state financial aid;

19 (ii) As appropriate and whenever possible, assist twelfth grade
20 students in completing the free application for federal student aid
21 and the Washington application for state financial aid; and

22 (iii) In conjunction with the Washington student achievement
23 council, distribute information on the Washington college grant and
24 demonstrate the use of the college financial aid calculator created
25 in section 2 of this act.

26 (c) Each school district may choose the date or series of dates
27 on which to hold a financial aid advising day.

28 (2) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall
29 coordinate with the Washington student achievement council whenever
30 possible to assist districts in facilitating opportunities outside of
31 regular school hours for parents to take part in seminars on
32 completing the free application for federal student aid and the
33 Washington application for state financial aid. Whenever possible,
34 districts shall provide spoken language interpreter services for
35 limited English-speaking families.

36 (3) Students under eighteen years of age may choose to opt out of
37 scheduled financial aid advising day activities with written consent
38 from a parent or guardian. Students eighteen years of age or older

1 may choose to opt out of financial aid advising day activities by
2 signing a waiver.

3 (4) A student may not be penalized for failing to complete
4 financial aid applications or for opting out of activities under
5 subsection (3) of this section.

6 (5) Educational staff, including instructional, administrative,
7 and counseling staff, may not be assessed or penalized on the basis
8 of students' completion of financial aid forms or students' decisions
9 to opt out under subsection (3) of this section.

10 (6)(a) Personally identifiable student or family information may
11 not be collected or shared by a school or school district, the
12 Washington student achievement council, the office of the
13 superintendent of public instruction, or any other organization or
14 individual participating in financial aid advising day.

15 (b) For purposes of this section, "personally identifiable
16 information" includes, but is not limited to:

- 17 (i) Mailing or home addresses;
- 18 (ii) Social security numbers;
- 19 (iii) Immigration status of any person; and
- 20 (iv) Employment records.

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