RCW 28B.118.010 Program design and student eligibility. The office of student financial assistance shall design the Washington college bound scholarship program in accordance with this section and in alignment with the Washington college grant program in chapter 28B.92 RCW unless otherwise provided in this section. The right of an eligible student to receive a college bound scholarship vest upon enrollment in the program that is earned by meeting the requirements of this section as it exists at the time of the student's enrollment under subsection (2) of this section.

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

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

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

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

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

(i) In grade seven through 12; or

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

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

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

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

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

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

(a)(i) Graduate from a public high school under RCW 28A.150.010 or an approved private high school under chapter 28A.195 RCW in Washington, have received a high school equivalency certificate under

RCW 28B.50.536, or have received home-based instruction under chapter 28A.200 RCW; and

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

(b) Have no felony convictions;

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

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

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

(5)(a) For students attending two or four-year institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, the value of the award shall be (i) the difference between the student's tuition and required fees, less the value of any state-funded grant, scholarship, or waiver assistance the student receives; (ii) plus $500 for books and materials.

(b)(i) For students attending private four-year institutions of higher education in Washington, the award amount shall be the average of awards granted to students in public research universities in Washington or the average of awards granted to students in public research universities in Washington in the 2014-15 academic year, whichever is greater, through the 2026-27 academic year.

(ii) Beginning in the 2027-28 academic year, for students attending private four-year not-for-profit institutions of higher education in Washington, the award amount shall be 50 percent of the average of awards for the same academic year granted to students in public research universities in Washington.

(c)(i) For students attending private vocational schools in Washington, the award amount shall be the average of awards granted to students in public community and technical colleges in Washington or the average of awards granted to students in public community and technical colleges in Washington in the 2014-15 academic year, whichever is greater, through the 2026-27 academic year.

(ii) Beginning in the 2027-28 academic year, for students attending two-year private not-for-profit schools in Washington, the award amount shall be the average of awards granted in the same academic year to students in public community and technical colleges in Washington, or the average of awards granted to students in public community and technical colleges in Washington in the 2014-15 academic year, whichever is greater.

(d) Beginning in the 2027-28 academic year, for students attending Western Governors University-Washington, as established in RCW 28B.77.240, the award shall be $4,650.

(6) Eligible students must enroll no later than the fall term, as defined by the institution of higher education, one academic year following high school graduation. College bound scholarship eligibility may not extend beyond six years or 150 percent of the

published length of the program in which the student is enrolled or the credit or clock-hour equivalent.

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

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

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

(10)(a) The scholarship award must be used within six years of receipt. Any unused scholarship tuition units revert to the Washington college bound scholarship account.

(b) Should the recipient terminate his or her enrollment for any reason during the academic year, the unused portion of the scholarship tuition units shall revert to the Washington college bound scholarship account. [2025 c 395 s 4; 2025 c 288 s 1; 2024 c 323 s 2; 2023 c 174 s 2; 2021 c 283 s 2. Prior: 2019 c 406 s 44; 2019 c 298 s 1; prior: 2018 c 204 s 1; 2018 c 12 s 1; 2017 3rd sp.s. c 20 s 11; 2015 3rd sp.s. c 36 s 8; 2015 c 244 s 3; prior: 2012 c 229 s 402; 2012 c 163 s 8; 2011 1st sp.s. c 11 s 226; 2008 c 321 s 9; 2007 c 405 s 2.]

Reviser's note: This section was amended by 2025 c 288 s 1 and by 2025 c 395 s 4, each without reference to the other. Both amendments are incorporated in the publication of this section under RCW 1.12.025(2). For rule of construction, see RCW 1.12.025(1).

Finding—Intent—Effective date—2025 c 395: See notes following RCW 28B.92.030.

Finding—Intent—2023 c 174: "The legislature finds that the college bound scholarship is an important financial aid program that prompts students to begin to have a college going mindset early in high school. The data indicates that since the first cohort of college bound scholarship students, there were just under 5,000 students who were college bound scholarship applicants but had grade point averages below 2.0. Despite not meeting the requirements to receive the college bound scholarship, these students still went on to pursue postsecondary education. The legislature recognizes that community and technical colleges do not require a certain grade point average to enroll, but that strong academic performance is still a requirement for direct admittance to a four-year institution of higher education from high school. Since the legislature believes that many students who may not have performed well academically in high school can still thrive at a community and technical college, it is the legislature's intent to keep students' dreams of higher education alive by allowing students without a "C" average to still qualify for college bound scholarships." [2023 c 174 s 1.]

Findings—Intent—2021 c 283: "The legislature enacted the college bound scholarship program in 2007 to encourage all Washington students to dream big by creating a guaranteed four-year tuition scholarship

program for students from low-income families. The legislature finds the program has been successful in achieving this goal. A report by the Washington state institute for public policy found that the scholarship increases high school graduation rates, probability of on-time college enrollment, college persistence, and college graduation rates. However, more than one quarter of eligible students are unable to access the scholarship by failing to sign the pledge required by the program. The legislature finds that the pledge has become an unintended barrier to entry, a problem made more acute as students are receiving their education remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic and have less access to school teachers, counselors, and peers. Therefore, the legislature intends with this act to remove the pledge as an eligibility requirement while retaining the requirement that students maintain a "C" average and avoid serious interactions with the criminal justice system for four years. In order to ensure that the legislature will fulfill its promise to provide a scholarship upon graduation, the legislature intends by this act to create a statutory contractual right for students who fulfill scholarship requirements that vests when the student becomes first eligible for the scholarship." [2021 c 283 s 1.]

Savings—2021 c 283: "This act does not affect any existing right acquired or liability or obligation incurred under the sections amended or repealed or under any rule or order adopted under those sections, nor does it affect any proceeding instituted under those sections." [2021 c 283 s 5.]

Intent—Retroactive application—2021 c 283: "The legislature intends this act to be curative, remedial, and retroactively apply to seventh grade students beginning with the 2019-20 school year." [2021 c 283 s 6.]

Effective date—2021 c 283: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately [May 12, 2021]." [2021 c 283 s 7.]

Findings—Intent—2019 c 406: See note following RCW 43.79.195.

Findings—Short title—2019 c 406: See notes following RCW 28B.92.200.

Findings—2019 c 406: See note following RCW 28B.94.020.

Findings—Intent—2019 c 406: See note following RCW 28C.30.050.

Findings—Intent—2019 c 406: See note following RCW 43.216.135.

Construction—Competitive procurement process and contract provisions—Conflict with federal requirements and Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978—2017 3rd sp.s. c 20: See notes following RCW 74.13.270.

Short title—2015 3rd sp.s. c 36: See note following RCW 28B.15.031.

Findings—2015 c 244: "The legislature finds that the college bound scholarship program has demonstrated that an early promise of financial aid results in increased high school graduation rates for low-income students. The promise of state financial aid to students from low-income families who work to graduate with sufficient grades and no felony convictions provides them with a path toward greater educational attainment and upward mobility. The scholarship program has the potential to move Washington toward its long-term goal of a better trained and educated workforce. Among the first two cohorts, college bound enrollees were fifteen percent and nineteen percent more likely to graduate from high school in 2012 and 2013 compared to low-income peers who were not part of the program.

The legislature also finds that a comprehensive review of the college bound scholarship program in 2014 resulted in unanimous recommendations to improve and enhance certain components of the program, including data collection, outreach, and program outcomes." [2015 c 244 s 1.]

Effective date—2012 c 229 ss 101, 117, 401, 402, 501 through 594, 601 through 609, 701 through 708, 801 through 821, 902, and 904: See note following RCW 28B.77.005.

Legislative recommendation—2012 c 163: "The legislature strongly recommends that the entities with which the department of social and health services contracts or collaborates to provide educational support services and educational outcomes for students who are dependent under chapter 13.34 RCW and the private agency under contract with the *higher education coordinating board or its successor to perform outreach for the passport to college promise program under chapter 28B.117 RCW and the college bound scholarship program under chapter 28B.118 RCW explore models for harnessing technology to keep in constant touch with the students they serve and keep these students engaged." [2012 c 163 s 12.]

***Reviser's note:** The higher education coordinating board was abolished by 2011 1st sp.s. c 11 s 301, effective July 1, 2012.

Findings—Effective date—2012 c 163: See notes following RCW 28B.117.010.

Effective date—2011 1st sp.s. c 11 ss 101-103, 106-202, 204-244, and 301: See note following RCW 28B.76.020.

Intent—2011 1st sp.s. c 11: See note following RCW 28B.76.020.

Findings—2008 c 321: See note following RCW 28A.320.190.