
SECOND SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1559

AS AMENDED BY THE SENATE

Passed Legislature - 2023 Regular Session

State of Washington 68th Legislature 2023 Regular Session

By House Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Entenman, Fitzgibbon, Stonier, Paul, Riccelli, Bergquist, Pollet, and Leavitt)

READ FIRST TIME 02/24/23.

1 AN ACT Relating to the student basic needs at public
2 postsecondary institutions act; adding a new section to chapter
3 28B.10 RCW; creating new sections; and providing an expiration date.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** In 2022, students at 39 colleges and
6 universities across Washington state participated in a survey about
7 basic needs insecurities, including access to food, housing, child
8 care, and more. The survey found that nearly half of all students in
9 all regions of the state experienced some type of basic needs
10 insecurity. One in every three students experienced either food
11 insecurity or housing insecurity. One in every 10 students had also
12 experienced homelessness in the previous 12 months. Some students
13 experienced these insecurities at higher rates than others, and
14 former foster youth had the highest rates of basic needs insecurities
15 with 75 percent experiencing either food or housing insecurity.
16 Addressing basic needs challenges for students contributes to their
17 ability to remain enrolled and pursue their educational goals as
18 evidenced by data from the two student support programs the
19 legislature previously enacted, the student emergency assistance
20 grant program and the supporting students experiencing homelessness

1 pilot program. When students received this assistance, an average of
2 88 percent of them were able to persist in their programs.

3 Therefore, the legislature intends to continue to support
4 students and help students meet their basic needs by increasing
5 access to resources and support services.

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.10
7 RCW to read as follows:

8 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
9 specific purpose, each institution of higher education, the
10 university campuses created under chapter 28B.45 RCW, and the tribal
11 college must have a minimum of one benefits navigator employed at a
12 minimum .75 full-time equivalent rate, not to be divided between two
13 or more staff, to assist students in accessing public benefits,
14 existing emergency assistance programs such as those funded by RCW
15 28B.50.295, and other community resources. Each benefits navigator
16 must be stationed at a single location on campus where students are
17 directed to receive assistance. The institutions of higher education
18 and the tribal college, in coordination with the respective benefits
19 navigators, must each develop a hunger-free and basic needs campus
20 strategic plan by April 1, 2024. Each strategic plan must:

21 (a) Identify campus food pantry policies that, in practice,
22 create barriers to access and reduce or remove those barriers in the
23 implementation of this subsection;

24 (b) Review and update methods to identify likely low-income and
25 food-insecure students and conduct communications and outreach
26 methods by the institution to promote opportunities for benefits
27 assistance (such as basic food enrollment, working connections child
28 care enrollment, referrals to the special supplemental nutrition
29 program for women, infants, and children, affordable housing
30 assistance) and emergency financial resources;

31 (c) Assess the needs and advantages of the benefits navigators;

32 (d) Identify opportunities for the institution and partnerships
33 with community-based organizations to holistically support students'
34 basic needs, access to benefits and community resources;

35 (e) Facilitate discussions and generate recommendations amongst
36 community stakeholders on the basic needs of the institution's
37 geographic postsecondary student population; and

1 (f) Assess the distribution of state funds for basic needs
2 support provided to institutions of higher education and the tribal
3 college.

4 (2) By the beginning of the 2024-25 academic year, the Washington
5 student achievement council must collect and disseminate results of a
6 student survey developed by the student achievement council, in
7 collaboration with the state board for community and technical
8 colleges and an organization representing the presidents of the
9 public four-year institutions of higher education, to assess food
10 security, housing security, and access to basic economic supports.
11 Results from the survey may be used by the institutions of higher
12 education and the tribal college. Existing survey tools may be used
13 for this purpose.

14 (3) Public four-year institutions of higher education and their
15 respective university campuses shall coordinate with an organization
16 representing the presidents of the public four-year institutions to
17 submit a report that must include outcomes from implementation of
18 benefits navigators and findings and activities from their respective
19 hunger-free and basic needs campus strategic plans. The community and
20 technical colleges shall coordinate with the state board for
21 community and technical colleges to submit a report that must include
22 outcomes from implementation of benefits navigators and findings and
23 activities from their respective hunger-free and basic needs campus
24 strategic plans. The organizations representing the presidents of the
25 public four-year institutions and the state board for community and
26 technical colleges must submit the reports by December 1, 2025, and
27 every other year thereafter, to the appropriate committees of the
28 legislature in accordance with RCW 43.01.036.

29 (4) The tribal college shall submit a report that must include
30 the findings and activities from implementation of the benefits
31 navigator and findings and activities from the hunger-free and basic
32 needs campus strategic plan. The tribal college must submit the
33 report by December 1, 2025, and every other year thereafter, to the
34 appropriate committees of the legislature in accordance with RCW
35 43.01.036.

36 (5) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this
37 section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

38 (a) "Benefits navigator" means an individual who is employed by
39 an institution of higher education for the purpose of helping

1 students seek, apply for, and receive assistance from benefits
2 programs, emergency resources, and community resources.

3 (b) "Institutions of higher education" has the same meaning as in
4 RCW 28B.10.016.

5 (c) "Student basic needs" means food, water, shelter, clothing,
6 physical health, mental health, child care, or similar needs that
7 students enrolled at an institution of higher education or tribal
8 college may face difficulty with and that hinders their ability to
9 begin or continue their enrollment.

10 (d) "Tribal colleges" means institutions of higher education
11 operated by an Indian tribe as defined in RCW 43.376.010.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) Subject to the availability of amounts
13 appropriated for this specific purpose, a pilot program to provide
14 free and low-cost meal plans or food vouchers to eligible low-income
15 students is established at:

16 (a) Four college districts, two on each side of the crest of the
17 Cascade mountains, selected by the state board for community and
18 technical colleges; and

19 (b) Two public four-year institutions of higher education, one on
20 each side of the crest of the Cascade mountains, selected by an
21 organization representing the presidents of public four-year
22 institutions.

23 (2) The pilot program expires July 1, 2026.

24 (3) This section expires January 1, 2027.

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** If specific funding for the purposes of
26 this act, referencing this act by bill or chapter number, is not
27 provided by June 30, 2023, in the omnibus appropriations act, this
28 act is null and void.

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