

18.43 Increasing Access and Affordability of Post-Secondary Education

Resolution passed 2021

Whereas, society must grant every student opportunities and wraparound supports to graduate from high school and adequately prepare and encourage them to pursue some type of post-secondary education; and

Whereas, tuition and associated housing, fees, and transportation costs continue to increase, making post-secondary education out of reach for too many students; and

Whereas, in Washington state, nearly 70% of all jobs require some type of post-secondary education or credential, but overall student credential attainment falls drastically short of this need. In addition, the demand for BA/BS degree graduates exceeds Washington state's capacity to meet employer needs, especially in STEM fields. These trends are leaving students without appropriate training/education and employers without qualified employees; and

Whereas, in Washington state, the credential attainment for Black students, Hispanic and Latinx students, Native American and Indigenous students, students with disabilities, students from low-income backgrounds, and potential first-generation college students are concerningly far below the state average; and

Whereas, there are established state programs and scholarships, such as the College Bound Scholarship, Washington College Grant, and Passport to Careers Program to help low to middle-income students, foster students, homeless students, and adults defray some or all tuition costs at eligible public and private colleges and career training programs. But for too many students, fees, books, housing, and wraparound services to ensure graduation or post-secondary certificate attainment remain a challenge; and

Whereas, more and more states are offering tuition-free programs for two-year community and technical colleges. For example, the City of Seattle has the Promise Program, which is open to all Seattle's high school graduates regardless of income, GPA, ability, or country of birth and includes counselor supports to ensure college admission plus college readiness support. While College Bound scholarships include tuition for both two and four-year degrees, there are many eligibility restrictions. Nationwide, over 20 states offer some type of free post-secondary tuition; and

Whereas, dual credit opportunities during high school, both onsite and offsite, expand access to post-secondary credits/certificates. However, enrollment and obtaining college credit from some dual-credit programs is complicated and can be cost-prohibitive. Plus, access is not equitable among Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students, rural or low-income students; and

Whereas, in 2011, Washington state passed, but did not fund, the "Launch Year Act" encouraging districts to expand options, particularly for historically underrepresented groups, to earn at least one year of post-secondary credit towards a CTE certificate, apprenticeship, or BA/BS degree, thereby "launching" students' careers while still in high school. Additional legislation (Academic Acceleration)

mandates that all students who just pass the state assessments (Math, English, or Science) are automatically enrolled in more rigorous, dual credit classes unless a guardian opts the student out. However, no legislative provisions were made for family communication, student supports, adequate credentialed staff, or assistance with students' fees and other costs associated with receiving post-secondary credit. These shortcomings may create vast inequities in participation and unrealized credit opportunities.

Therefore, be it

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils shall advocate for policies and programs that:

- Expand access and eliminate inequitable or punitive restrictions to scholarship programs
- Increase opportunities for all students (especially low-income, high mobility, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, rural, potential first-generation post-secondary students, students with disabilities, other under-represented post-secondary groups, and particularly those students who are in more than one group) to achieve a post-secondary credential or degree

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils shall advocate for policies and programs that outreach to families, guardians, and students to:

- Specifically reach low-income, high-mobility students, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, rural, potential first-generation post-secondary students, students with disabilities, other under-represented post-secondary groups, and particularly those students who are in more than one group to ensure they can realize a post-secondary degree/credential and earn a living wage
- Provide ongoing communication about the many options and logistics of receiving post-secondary credit (dual credit) in high school
- Provide communication on post-secondary scholarships, grants, and options with trained or certified post-secondary career counselors in our high schools
- Assist families with the process to enroll and obtain credit for dual credit classes; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils shall advocate for policies and programs that make post-secondary education within reach for all Washington state students (especially low-income, high mobility, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, rural, potential first-generation post-secondary students, students with disabilities, other underrepresented post-secondary groups and particularly those students who are in more than one group), including but not limited to:

- Increasing state funding to:
 - Cover all dual-credit fees, thereby allowing all students to participate without financial implications and ensures that all students who receive a qualifying grade can receive the dual credit earned
 - Fund high school “career counselors” that are specifically trained in post-secondary options and logistics

- Cover costs of all Washington state public post-secondary options which include public state colleges, certificate programs and universities for tuition, books, counseling, mentorships, and affordable student housing both on and off-campus
- Offer state-wide “Free Community and Technical College for All” and include wrap-around support services in high school and college to ensure post-secondary graduation success
- Increase access to BA/BS degrees by expanding the number of regional campuses of our state universities and also expanding the number of Community and Technical colleges that can offer Baccalaureate degrees
- Increase revenues to support post-secondary access that is not from regressive funding sources, nor take funds away from other education, social, or health programs.