

### Supporting Student's Basic Needs

ASWWU greatly appreciates the passing of the Workforce Education Investment Act, during the 2019 legislative session, that expanded the Washington College Grant (formally known as the State Need Grant) . This allows students whose families make around \$50,000 or less a year to receive close to full-tuition scholarship to public colleges and universities, while families who make up 100% of the Median Family Income (\$88,000 for a family of four) may receive partial tuition scholarship or aid, This expansion granted aid to over 110,000 students in 2020, compared to just 92,000 students in 2019. While students and families are now better positioned to afford higher education, tuition does not capture the entire cost of attendance or address accessibilities issues that keep students from succeeding in higher education. With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, issues of housing and food insecurity have only increased nationwide.

Therefore, the ASWWU asks that the legislature

- Protect and increase existing financial aid programs such as the Washington College Grant, and other financial aid investments made by the Washington Workforce Education Investment Act.
- Revise legislation regarding financial aid to acknowledge that unexpected job losses, unstable housing as a result of COVID-19, and differential access to public benefits programs are not considered by FAFSA and that data on student's current FAFSA may not be helpful in addressing current needs.
- Support **Senate Bill 5241** that will implement local economic grant programs that promote equity and economic inclusion for people experiencing poverty, with a particular focus on people of color and people in rural communities, through the coordination of existing community programs and resources.
- This point will be look up basic needs data on use of basic need pantries in WA state

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### Creating Successful and Stable Futures for Foster Youth with Disabilities

Today's competitive job market increasingly requires postsecondary degrees or certifications. A recent report by The Business-Higher Education Forum (BHEF) estimates that 85% of current jobs and 90% of the fastest and best paying jobs now require postsecondary education credentials. Attaining these credentials involves significant socioeconomic resources. Washington state students who are experiencing unstable living conditions, specifically those who are under the age of 21, in the foster care system, and/or are experiencing homelessness, face increased obstacles and lack of resources. Those who are most vulnerable to receiving less quality attention and resources are college-age youth in prisons, foster care, or are homeless who have mental, developmental, emotional, learning, and physical disabilities.

Therefore, the ASWWU asks that the legislature

- Support **House Bill 1061** that will combine the efforts of the Department of Social and Health Services, Behavioral Health Administration, the Developmental Disabilities Administration, and other related services in developing a transition plan to meet the needs of youth with disabilities transition into adulthood. This transition plan will help reduce the number of foster youths with disabilities being inappropriately discharged into hospitals, or further unstable living conditions, without any possibility of accessing resources for postsecondary credentials.
- Prioritize foster youth with disabilities with health waivers in the Developmental Disabilities Administration waitlist.
- Encourage the use of State Operated Living Alternatives for foster youth to decrease unstable living situations and disruption to way of life by having them remain in their communities.

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## Ensuring Equity in Healthcare

This past year health inequities have come into a sharper focus as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Disparities across healthcare and historically underrepresented communities has created a climate of mistrust that can deter people from accessing medical care because they fear discrimination and stigma. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have identified inequities in social determinants of health, such as socioeconomic status and access to healthcare as factors that contribute to lesser quality of healthcare. Addressing health inequities will lead to positive health outcomes and healthier communities.

Therefore, the ASWWU asks that the legislature.

- Support **Senate Bill 5228**, to create a curriculum on health equity to teach attitudes, knowledge, and skills that will enable students in the medical professions to care for patients of diverse communities. However, we ask that this legislation be broadened to include other postsecondary health and wellness educational programs in Washington State. These would include nursing (RN-BSN), public health, and behavioral and mental health. ASWWU also supports the complementary **Senate Bill 5229** relating to health equity continuing education for health care professionals every four years.
- Support **House Bill 1149** that proposes to create health literacy programs for students grades 9-12, to be implemented in the 2022-2023 school year.

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## **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and anti-racism training in higher education are inexorably linked to students and staff of all backgrounds, and their academic and professional success. The surge in DEI and anti-racism commitments over the past summer following the historic Black Lives Matter protests across the country, provides an opportunity for legislatures to prioritize legislation that supports, protects, and brings equity to historically underrepresented students.

Students continue to be the activists whose actions lead to socio-economic change. ASWWU supports **Senate Bill 5227** that will put more emphasis on DEI and anti-racism training of staff and faculty in higher education. This training is expected to result in

**Mention students who are on DEI committees must be recognized for their work whether that is in financial compensation or academic credit ---WWU BSO remuneration/ payment Section 1.1**

Look into "Sign on to the Okanagan Charter and make a commitment to become a health promoting institution," that WWU has promised

\*\*\*Wording for the student committees in the programming of the DEI to not have elements of student activist stripped away from them

In order to effectively educate about marginalized peoples, said peoples must be involved throughout the entire creation and implementation of diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings and programs in higher education.

## **Supporting Our Undocumented Community and Mixed Status Families at WWU and in Washington State**

ASWWU appreciates the approval of **Senate Bill 6561** during the 2019-2020 legislative session that allows undocumented students to apply for state-sponsored loans for tuition. However, it should be recognized that throughout a student's time in higher education, there will always be unexpected fees and costs. Lack of support and availability of resources, especially for healthcare, can lead to physical and mental health challenges, poor academic performance, and low retention rates.

In addition to supporting undocumented students in their high education and career goals, we find it important to encompass and support the undocumented community as a whole. Therefore, the ASWWU asks that the legislature to seriously consider

- **House Bill 1191** that will expand healthcare options to include undocumented individuals.
- Creating a budget proviso to provide a one-time \$1,200 stipend to students who filled out the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WAFSA). This stipend will help support individuals who were ineligible to receive aid from the federal CARES act, or the federal stimulus check.
- Revoking the business license of the GEO group currently managing the Northwest Immigration Detention Center in Tacoma, the one remaining private prison in Washington state. This recommendation is based on its history of human rights violations, poor physical conditions, hunger strikes, and deaths. This issue is linked to **House Bill 1090** which relates to banning private, for-profit prisons in Washington state.

**\*\*Needs to be researched more/ Might be cut out**

### **Prison to Postsecondary Education Pathways**

The United States has the largest incarceration rate in the world. According to the NAACP, while the U.S. makes up 5% of the global population, it has nearly 25% of the world's prison population. This reality disproportionately affects Black, Indigenous, and people of color who are overrepresented in the U.S. prison population. Former incarcerated or convicted students who are seeking postsecondary education face financial barriers with many federal student loans not being available to them. Research proves that postsecondary education programs reduce recidivism while also increasing employment prospects following release. Additionally, research has also proven that there is a return on investment with education programs in prisons.

- ASWWU supports **Senate Bill 1044** that expands resources towards postsecondary education and training to incarcerated individuals.
- ASWWU also emphasizes the importance of section **RCW 72.09.270** that requires the department of corrections shall develop an individual reentry plan that also assesses the needs of the incarcerated individual that consider “demographic biases, such as culture, age, and gender, as well as the needs of the offender, including any learning disabilities, substance abuse or mental health issues, and social or behavior challenges.

Look into federal Second Chance Pell program...Look into Walla Walla community college involvement?

College programs online...” with the success of pilot programs \*, please consider...”

Outsourced for WA

**Commented [MW1]:** Make more specific to WA state

