

An Act to Improve the Educational Rewards Grant Program to Assist Low-Income Workers (H 977/S 42) FACT SHEET

The Educational Rewards Grant helps low-income workers pay for the higher education and training they need to move into the middle class and become financially secure. In addition to establishing a permanent Educational Rewards Grant, this bill would also create pilot student success programs to help low-income adult students stay in school and complete a degree or certificate. By limiting the grant to high-demand occupations, this bill will also provide the Commonwealth with the skilled workforce necessary to remain globally competitive.

THE LEGISLATION

This bill codifies the Educational Rewards Grant so that it can continue to help low-income students enroll in and successfully complete education or training leading to identified high-demand jobs. The grant is currently not available due to lack of funding. This bill specifically:

- Preserves the *only* state grant available to low-income students enrolled in college less than part-time. It is one of the only grants available to students participating in a non-degree program. Eligible students may receive up to \$3,000 per academic year, of which 30% may be used for living expenses such as transportation and childcare, and
- Creates a pilot program that offers supports such as, intensive counseling, college and career advising, tutoring, child care and transportation, to Education Rewards students to help them complete a degree or certificate.

THE FACTS

- The statewide community college completion rate is 18.4% compared to 27.5% nationally, indicating that students in Massachusetts need more supports while pursuing higher education.¹
- According to *Measuring Up, 2008*, only 51% of first-year students in community colleges return for a second year.²
- In 2008, recipients of the Washington State's Opportunity Grant program, a program similar to Education Rewards that provides intensive student support, had a **retention/completion rate** of 81 percent as compared to 73 percent of Pell grant recipients who did not receive the Opportunity Grant and who were enrolled in the same high-demand programs.³

THE SOLUTION

Support the Educational Rewards Grant bill, preserving the state's only grant program available to low-income students enrolled in college less than part-time and creating a pilot program to increase the supports available to students to ensure their successful completion of education and training programs.

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Sources:

¹ The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), 2008 Graduation Rates. Available at <http://www.higheredinfo.org>

² The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, *Measuring Up, 2008*. Available at <http://measuringup2008.highereducation.org>

³ Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, *Opportunity Grants: A Progress Report on the Post-secondary Opportunity Program* (October 2008) Available at <http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu>