

SENATOR MATT BOEHNKE

8TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT - WASHINGTON STATE SENATE

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New law breaks down barriers to college for Washington's most vulnerable youth



Sen. Matt Boehnke, R-Kennewick/Credit: Washington State Senate

OLYMPIA... Yesterday, Senator Matt Boehnke celebrated the signing of Senate Bill 5543 into law. This bipartisan effort expands access to the College Bound Scholarship program. It ensures automatic enrollment for eligible students, streamlining the process and eliminating bureaucratic barriers for some of Washington's most vulnerable youth.

[The new law](#), passed unanimously in the Senate and received strong bipartisan support in the House, makes critical improvements to the state's College Bound Scholarship by ensuring eligible students are automatically enrolled without requiring families to navigate confusing application processes. The bill also clarifies eligibility for students who have experienced foster

care or adoption and aligns more closely with the Washington College Grant to provide a stronger safety net for low-income students.

Senator Boehnke co-sponsored the legislation and praised the bill's passage as a victory for educational equity and opportunity.

"This bill is about breaking down barriers—period," said [Sen. Boehnke, R-Kennewick](#). "For too long, students who qualified for help still slipped through the cracks because of paperwork and red tape. This law fixes that. Every eligible student will be automatically enrolled in the College Bound Scholarship program. That's what good government looks like—smart, effective, and focused on real outcomes."

The legislation builds on Washington's ongoing commitment to ensure college is within reach for all students, regardless of income or background. Under the new law, students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch will be enrolled in the scholarship program automatically, and additional supports will help ensure that youth in foster care or adopted from foster care between the ages of 14 and 18 remain eligible.

"This isn't just a bill—it's a promise to every seventh grader in Washington that if you work hard and graduate, we've got your back," Boehnke added. "We're investing in the next generation of nurses, teachers, technicians, and entrepreneurs. This is a smart investment in our workforce and communities' future."

The College Bound Scholarship covers tuition and fees at Washington's public colleges and universities and provides a stipend for books. With the changes enacted in this law, the program is now even more accessible and impactful for those who need it most.

"Education is the great equalizer, and this bill brings us one step closer to ensuring that no student is left behind simply because they couldn't fill out a form," said Boehnke.

"Today, we celebrate a big win for kids, families, and the future of Washington state."

[SB 5543](#) was signed into law by the governor and takes effect July 27, 2025, in time for the next academic enrollment cycle.

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