

Latino/a Educational Achievement Project Policy Brief: House Bill 1706

House Bill (HB) 1706, if approved by the governor and state legislature, would allow undocumented students to qualify for state financial aid to attend a public college or university.

HB 1706 targets the same students who now qualify to pay resident (in-state) tuition at a public college or university due to approval of HB 1079 by the state Legislature in 2003. To qualify under HB 1079, a student must have lived in Washington State for three years prior to graduating from high school, meet college entrance requirements the same as all other students, and be of good moral character.

The problem is that these students, known as 1079 students, do not qualify for state or federal financial aid, programs intended to help low-income students attend college.

In Washington State, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of immigrant children who came with their parents to the U.S. without legal papers are graduating from our high schools annually. After spending all or nearly all of their K-12 years in the United States, these students are prepared for and want to attend college, but their families cannot afford the cost.

To correct this, the Latino/a Educational Achievement Project (LEAP) forwarded a proposal to Washington State's Legislature in 2009 to allow 1079 students to qualify for State Need Grant (SNG), a program that helps low-income students pay for the cost of college. HB 1706 was introduced in the state Legislature in 2009 but it was not approved.

In 2010, LEAP again will ask the state Legislature to approve HB 1706. Passage of HB 1706 would enable 1079 students to qualify for more than \$5,000 for each of four years if attending a university, and more than \$2,500 for two years if attending a community college. If made eligible, 1079 students would have to meet the same income guidelines as all other SNG-eligible students.

Economic Impact of Immigrant Families in Washington State

For decades, Washington's agricultural industry has relied on immigrant labor. In 2006, **Washington Governor Christine Gregoire** wrote in a letter to U.S. Senator Patty Murray about the importance of Washington State's immigrant workers in 2006:

“We are one of the top five states in the country in farm worker employment. And key crops, like our apples and cherries, are heavily dependent on migrant and seasonal farm workers.”

“Washington's economy lives and breathes through agriculture, an industry in which at least 60 percent of its labor force is immigrant labor.”

Shown below is the value to Washington State of immigrant workers. It shows that Washington is #1 in the nation in production of certain crops. The chart also shows the percent of total U.S. production and the dollar value to our state.

| | Washington's Rank in U.S. | Percent of Total U.S. Production | Dollar Value to Washington State |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| CROP | 2007 | 2007 | 2007 |
| Red Raspberries | #1 | 90.9 | \$27.9 million |
| Hops | #1 | 77.3 | \$128.2 million |
| Apples | #1 | 57.3 | \$1.75 billion |
| Sweet Cherries | #1 | 51.3 | \$327.1 million * |
| Pears | #1 | 46.1 | \$178.2 million |
| Concord Grapes | #1 | 45.6 | \$172.2 million ** |
| Asparagus | #2 | 27.0 | \$17.8 million |
| * all cherries ** all grapes | | | Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2007 Production |

CONCLUSION

Just as Latino adults have contributed to a “world-class” agriculture industry, if given the educational opportunity, the children of these adults who have made possible a “world-class” agriculture in Washington State, would contribute to world-class classrooms, hospitals, dental clinics, engineering offices, and other professional and trade occupations in our state.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION REQUIRED in 2010:

Washington's State Legislature and Governor Gregoire should approve HB 1706.

RELATED CONGRESSIONAL ACTION REQUIRED in 2010 (see attached):

The United States Congress and President Barack Obama should approved the DREAM Act.