

# SENATE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

### **SENATE, No. 2590**

with committee amendments

# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 9, 2022

The Senate Higher Education Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2590, with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill makes a Fiscal Year 2023 supplemental appropriation of \$1.5 million from the State General Fund to the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority in the Department of State to provide tuition assistance for students enrolled at Thomas Edison State University.

Established in 1972, Thomas Edison State University (TESU) provides distinctive undergraduate and graduate education for self-directed adults through flexible, high-quality collegiate learning and assessment opportunities. TESU is one of New Jersey's senior public institutions of higher education and the only university in the State dedicated exclusively to adults.

For more than 45 years, TESU has pioneered the use of the latest technologies to develop and deliver academic programs that work around the unique needs of adult learners and has served as a national leader in the assessment of adult learning. The academic program revolves around the unique needs of adults, removing barriers that limit many adult students who cannot sacrifice their personal and professional responsibilities to pursue their education.

Students earn credit through a variety of methods designed exclusively for adult learners. These methods include online courses, guided independent study, examination programs, courses delivered via mobile devices, maximizing the transfer of credits earned from other regionally accredited institutions, earning credit for professional or military training, and by demonstrating college-level knowledge acquired outside of a traditional classroom.

Due to the unique nature of academic offerings provided by TESU, traditional forms of tuition assistance, including Tuition Aid Grants, are not always available to part-time associates degree and bachelor's degree-seeking students enrolled at the university. The lack of financial support, including the financial support provided by Tuition Aid Grants, is a critical reason many students stop attending or drop out entirely.

This bill would appropriate \$1.5 million in supplemental funding for the establishment of a separate program that would be geared specifically toward non-traditional students enrolled at TESU. The tuition assistance would allow the university to establish the Grant Opportunity for TESU, or GO-TESU, which would enable the university to grow their mission and to open the doors for many individuals seeking to further their educational aspirations.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to make the supplemental appropriation in Fiscal Year 2023, as opposed to in the Fiscal Year 2022.