

SENATE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 4127

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 5, 2026

The Senate Higher Education Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Senate Bill No. 4127.

This bill establishes the New Jersey Student Emergency Aid Program in the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE).

The purpose of the program is to provide emergency aid grants to undergraduate students enrolled in public institutions of higher education who are facing unexpected financial crises and require financial assistance for living expenses. Under the bill, OSHE is required to distribute funds, within the limit of available funds, to each public institution of higher education. Each public institution of higher education will administer the program and distribute emergency aid grants to eligible students enrolled in the institution.

OSHE, in consultation with the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority, public institutions of higher education, and the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, is required under the bill to establish guidelines for the program which would include: (1) eligibility criteria for student applicants; (2) permissible uses of emergency aid grants; (3) application and approval procedures for use by public institutions of higher education to ensure the timely distribution of grants; (4) the maximum emergency aid grant per student for each public institution of higher education; (5) an annual or lifetime limit for emergency aid grants on a per student basis; and (6) reporting and recordkeeping requirements for public institutions of higher education distributing grants under the program. Each public institution of higher education would adopt policies and procedures consistent with the guidelines.

The bill stipulates that the financial aid office of each public institution of higher education will manage student applications for emergency grants, distribute the grants to eligible students, and advertise the availability of the grants.

Emergency aid grants distributed under the program may not be considered financial aid or taxable income for the purposes of determining a student's eligibility for State-funded student financial assistance programs, to the extent permitted by law. Emergency aid grants distributed under the program may also not be used to pay outstanding tuition or fees or in the repayment of student loans.

The bill requires each public institution of higher education distributing grants under the program to submit an annual report to OSHE. OSHE will subsequently submit a report summarizing this information to the Governor and the Legislature.

Finally, the bill establishes a nonlapsing, revolving fund to be known as the “New Jersey Student Emergency Aid Program Fund,” and appropriates \$1.5 million to the fund.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

- establish the “New Jersey Student Emergency Aid Program” in the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, and not in the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority as it was established in the bill as introduced;
- provide that an equivalent office of a public institution of higher education’s financial aid office may fulfill certain requirements with respect to grant application management, distribution, and advertisement;
- require that emergency aid grants distributed under the program are to, at a minimum, meet the federal definition of emergency financial assistance;
- make technical changes to the bill title and synopsis.