

ASSEMBLY, No. 308

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:

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District 17 (Middlesex and Somerset)

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District 27 (Essex and Morris)

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SYNOPSIS

Establishes the New Jersey School Counts County College Scholarship Program.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



1 **AN ACT** establishing the New Jersey School Counts County College
2 Scholarship Program and supplementing chapter 71B of Title
3 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*

7
8 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "New Jersey
9 School Counts County College Scholarship Program Act."

10
11 2. The Legislature finds and declares that: a well-trained and
12 educated population is vital to New Jersey's efforts to attract and
13 retain highly skilled businesses and to ensure the State's continued
14 economic well-being; it is important for young people in the State
15 to know that there is a correlation between working hard in high
16 school and succeeding in postsecondary education, and finding and
17 keeping a job; and the Business Coalition for Educational
18 Excellence at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce has
19 established a successful recognition program for high school
20 students known as School Counts that recognizes students for their
21 attendance and academic efforts in high school and provides
22 certification of these efforts to employers and postsecondary
23 education institutions.

24 The Legislature further finds therefore that it is sound public
25 policy to establish a Statewide program that supports and rewards
26 hard-working, conscientious, and responsible students for their
27 efforts in pursuing and completing their secondary education
28 through the establishment of a county college scholarship program
29 for such students, and to encourage all county colleges to
30 participate in the program.

31
32 3. As used in this act:

33 "Authority" means the Higher Education Student Assistance
34 Authority established pursuant to N.J.S.18A:71A-3;

35 "County college" means a public two-year institution of higher
36 education established pursuant to the provisions of chapter 64A of
37 Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes;

38 "Scholarship" means a scholarship awarded under the New
39 Jersey School Counts County College Scholarship Program.

40
41 4. There is established within the Higher Education Student
42 Assistance Authority the New Jersey School Counts County
43 College Scholarship Program. Under the program, a student who
44 graduates from a public or nonpublic high school located in this
45 State who has satisfied the attendance, punctuality, and academic
46 criteria established pursuant to section 7 of this act shall be eligible
47 to receive a two-year scholarship to a county college.

1 5. a. Within the limit of available appropriations, a scholarship
2 of up to \$2,000 per year shall be awarded to an eligible student
3 enrolled on a full-time basis in a degree program at a county
4 college. The maximum scholarship amount shall not exceed \$4,000
5 over a two-year period.

6 b. A scholarship shall cover the full cost of attendance which
7 shall include tuition, books, and other necessary fees and expenses
8 related to the course of study. In no academic year shall a program
9 participant be eligible for a scholarship under the program greater
10 than the total cost of attendance, less the total value of all other
11 scholarships and grants received by the participant for that
12 academic year.

13 c. A student shall be eligible for a scholarship for no more than
14 two academic years.

15
16 6. To be eligible to receive a scholarship, an applicant shall
17 meet the following requirements:

18 a. be a resident of the State pursuant to guidelines established
19 by the authority;

20 b. apply to participate in the New Jersey School Counts County
21 College Scholarship Program at the beginning of the freshman year
22 of high school;

23 c. have been awarded a School Counts certificate by the high
24 school of attendance pursuant to section 7 of this act;

25 d. have applied for all other available forms of State and
26 federal financial aid, exclusive of loans;

27 e. be enrolled for minimum of 24 credit hours per year at a
28 county college, not including credit hours in a remedial curriculum;
29 and

30 f. commence a course of study at a county college not more
31 than six months after graduation from high school.

32
33 7. The authority shall work, in conjunction with the
34 Commissioner of Education and the Business Coalition for
35 Educational Excellence of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce,
36 to encourage the participation of public and nonpublic high schools
37 in the School Counts Scholarship Program. Each participating high
38 school shall award a School Counts certificate to a student who
39 graduates from the high school who meets the following
40 requirements:

41 a. achieves a 95% or greater rate of school attendance and
42 punctuality in each year of high school;

43 b. achieves a C grade point average or above in all academic
44 courses in each year of high school;

45 c. completes more than the minimum number of credits
46 required for graduation from high school;

47 d. completes high school in eight consecutive semesters or, in
48 the case of a special education student, within the timelines

1 established by the student's Individualized Education Program
2 (IEP); and

3 e. successfully completes Algebra I.
4

5 8. A student who meets the eligibility criteria pursuant to
6 section 6 of this act and who receives a School Counts certificate
7 pursuant to section 7 of this act shall receive a School Counts
8 Scholarship for the first year of enrollment in a county college. A
9 student may receive a scholarship for the second year of enrollment
10 in a county college upon filing a renewal application with the
11 authority and providing evidence as required by the authority that
12 the student has made satisfactory academic progress toward the
13 award of an academic degree.
14

15 9. The scholarship program shall be financed through a
16 combination of State appropriations, county college funds, and
17 private contributions. A county college shall be eligible to receive
18 State matching funds on a per student basis when it provides
19 evidence to the authority that it has raised an equal amount of funds
20 for the student's scholarship from private donations or other
21 sources. A maximum of \$500,000 in State funds shall be provided
22 to each participating county college.
23

24 10. In the first year of the operation of the scholarship program,
25 the authority shall select four county colleges to participate in the
26 program, with not less than one county college from the north,
27 central, and southern regions of the State. In each subsequent year
28 of the operation of the scholarship program, three additional county
29 colleges shall be selected until each county college is participating
30 in the program. The authority shall collaborate with the New Jersey
31 Chamber of Commerce, the Secretary of Higher Education, and the
32 New Jersey Council of County Colleges in the selection of the
33 participating county colleges.
34

35 11. a. A scholarship recipient who is dismissed from the county
36 college for academic or disciplinary reasons shall be ineligible for a
37 scholarship and the student shall repay to the authority in full the
38 amount of any scholarship received.

39 b. A student who fails to make repayment to the authority
40 pursuant to subsection a. of this section who is the holder of any
41 professional or occupational license issued by a State licensing
42 board shall be subject to disciplinary action by that board which
43 may include, but need not be limited to, the revocation or
44 suspension of the license until such time as repayment is made to
45 the authority.

46 c. A scholarship recipient who withdraws from a county
47 college due to the student's illness or the illness of a member of the
48 student's immediate family or due to a family emergency shall not

1 be required to repay to the authority the amount of any scholarship
2 received and shall not be ineligible for subsequent receipt of a
3 scholarship.

4
5 12. The Higher Education Student Assistance Authority shall
6 adopt in accordance with the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.
7 1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), rules and regulations as may be
8 necessary to implement the provisions of this act.

9
10 13. This act shall take effect for the 2016-2017 academic year;
11 however, the authority may immediately take such administrative
12 action as may be necessary to implement the provisions of this act.

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15 STATEMENT

16
17 This bill establishes the New Jersey School Counts County
18 College Scholarship Program in the Higher Education Student
19 Assistance Authority. Under the program, a student who graduates
20 from a participating public or nonpublic high school located in this
21 State who has satisfied certain attendance, punctuality, and
22 academic criteria during high school will be eligible to receive a
23 two-year scholarship to a county college. This scholarship program
24 is modeled on an initiative developed by the Business Coalition for
25 Educational Excellence of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce.
26 That initiative provides students with a School Counts certificate
27 which attests to the student's efforts and hard work during high
28 school and which the student can present to potential employers as
29 evidence of his diligence and accomplishments. The initiative
30 recognizes those student who, although they may not be straight A
31 students, have demonstrated a commitment and understanding of
32 the importance of education. This initiative is currently operational
33 in several counties.

34 Under the bill, the authority will work in conjunction with the
35 Business Coalition for Educational Excellence to encourage the
36 participation of public and nonpublic high schools in the School
37 Counts Scholarship Program. Each participating high school will
38 award a School Counts certificate to a student who graduates from
39 that high school and 1) achieves a 95% or greater rate of school
40 attendance in each year of high school; 2) achieves a C grade point
41 average or above in all academic courses in each year of high
42 school; 3) completes more than the minimum number of credits
43 required for graduation from high school; 4) completes high school
44 in eight consecutive semesters or, in the case of a special education
45 student, within the timelines established by the student's IEP; and 5)
46 successfully competes Algebra I.

47 A student who receives a School Counts certificate will be
48 eligible for a two-year scholarship for full-time enrollment in a

1 degree program at a county college in an annual amount not to
2 exceed \$2,000. The second year of the scholarship will be
3 dependent upon the student making application to the authority and
4 presenting evidence to the authority of satisfactory progress toward
5 the award of an academic degree. Prior to receipt of a School
6 Counts Scholarship, a student would have to have applied for all
7 other available forms of State and federal grants and scholarships.
8 The student must begin a course of study at a county college within
9 six months of graduation from high school.

10 The scholarship program will be financed through a combination
11 of State appropriations, county college funds, and private
12 contributions. A county college will be eligible to receive State
13 funds on a per student basis when the college demonstrates that it
14 has raised an equal amount of funds for the student's scholarship
15 from private donations or other sources.

16 In the first year of the scholarship program's operation, four
17 county colleges will be selected for participation with not less than
18 one college from the north, central, and southern regions of the
19 State. In each subsequent year, three additional county colleges
20 will be selected for participation until such time as all county
21 colleges are eventually participating in the program.