ASSEMBLY, No. 921

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:
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SYNOPSIS

Clarifies that non-credit courses are eligible courses under the volunteer tuition credit program.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.

AN ACT concerning tuition credit for certain volunteers and amending P.L.1998, c.145.

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

1. Section 1 of P.L.1998, c.145 (C.18A:71-78.1) is amended to read as follows:

1. A person who is an active member of a volunteer fire company or volunteer first aid or rescue squad or association in good standing and the dependent children and spouse of a volunteer shall be allowed to enroll in **[**a**]** postsecondary **[**program**]** credit or non-credit courses on a tuition-free basis in a county college, county vocational school or county technical institute and be eligible to receive tuition credit in an amount not to exceed a maximum of $2,400 for the member, children and spouse; provided that available classroom space permits and that tuition paying students constitute the minimum number required for the course. Nothing herein shall preclude a county college, county vocational school or county technical institute from requiring registration and lab fees for individuals attending courses pursuant to this act.

(cf: P.L.1998, c.145, s.1)

2. Section 3 of P.L.1998, c.145 (C.18A:71-78.3) is amended to read as follows:

3. Upon being accepted and enrolled in a county college, county vocational school or county technical institute, the volunteer, dependent child or spouse shall provide verification to the institution that the volunteer has performed the service required for the tuition credit. Upon completion of each semester, the volunteer shall submit **[**a transcript**]** to the municipality to be maintained in a permanent record verification of course completion issued by the institution. The volunteer or the dependent child or spouse shall **[**maintain a "C" grade average**]** satisfactorily complete each course taken under the program in order to continue eligibility for the tuition credit program.

(cf: P.L.1998, c.145, s.3)

3. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

The volunteer tuition credit program, established under P.L.1998, c.145, provides a tuition credit benefit of up to $2,400 over four years to active members of a volunteer fire company or

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

volunteer first aid or rescue squad or association and the dependent children and spouse of such members. Under the program, eligible members may enroll in a postsecondary program at a county college, county vocational school or county technical institute, provided that available classroom space permits and that tuition paying students constitute the minimum number required for the course. As implemented, participating institutions apply the tuition credit against the student's tuition bill.

This bill clarifies the original intent of the Legislature that the tuition credit program is available for enrollment in both credit and non-credit courses. Evidently some county colleges have interpreted the use of the word "transcript" to mean that the program is only available for credit-bearing courses.

Emergency services volunteers provide invaluable service to our communities at a cost which is often less than the cost of paid personnel. This selfless volunteerism helps many New Jersey communities to effectively control property taxes. Consequently, to express gratitude for the services provided by the volunteers, county colleges, county vocational schools and county technical institutes should work to ensure that the credit is available to each eligible volunteer.