

SENATE, No. 1796

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 24, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex)

SYNOPSIS

Provides that State pay high school equivalency exam fees for low-income individuals.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT concerning high school equivalency exam fees,
2 supplementing chapter 50A of Title 18A of the New Jersey
3 Statutes, and amending P.L.1992, c.43.

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

7
8 1. (New section) a. No later than six months following the
9 effective date of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature
10 as this bill), the State Board of Education shall establish a program
11 to pay the fee of a high school equivalency exam on behalf of a
12 low-income individual. The State board shall specify the manner in
13 which an individual may apply for the payment, including the
14 documentation that shall be used to verify the individual's income.
15 The program established by the State board shall not provide
16 payment for more than one exam for an individual.

17 b. As used in this section:

18 "High school equivalency exam" means any adult education
19 assessment approved by the State board as a basis for qualifying for
20 a State-issued high school diploma;

21 "Low-income individual" means an individual who resides in a
22 household in which the household income is less than or equal to
23 185 percent of the most recent federal poverty guidelines available.

24
25 2. Section 9 of P.L.1992, c.43 (C.34:15D-9) is amended to read
26 as follows:

27 9. a. A restricted, nonlapsing, revolving Workforce
28 Development Partnership Fund, to be managed and invested by the
29 State Treasurer, is hereby established to: provide employment and
30 training services to qualified displaced, disadvantaged and
31 employed workers by means of training grants or customized
32 training services; provide for the other costs indicated in subsection
33 a. of section 4 of P.L.1992, c.43 (C.34:15D-4); provide for the New
34 Jersey Innovation and Research Fellowship Program as provided for
35 in section 3 of P.L.2015, c.235 (C.34:15D-26); provide for the
36 Talent Network Program as provided for in section 2 of P.L.2019,
37 c.125 (C.34:15D-29); and facilitate the provision of education and
38 training to youth by means of grants provided by the Youth
39 Transitions to Work Partnership pursuant to the provisions of
40 P.L.1993, c.268 (C.34:15E-1 et al.). All appropriations to the fund,
41 all interest accumulated on balances in the fund and all cash
42 received for the fund from any other source shall be used solely for
43 the purposes specifically delineated by this act.

44 b. During any fiscal year beginning after June 30, 2001, of the
45 total revenues dedicated to the program during any one fiscal year:

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.

1 25% shall be deposited in an account of the Workforce
2 Development Partnership Fund reserved to provide employment and
3 training services for qualified displaced workers, and through fiscal
4 year 2023, not less than 10% of the revenues deposited in that
5 account shall be reserved to provide employment and training
6 services to qualified displaced workers in the pursuit of industry-
7 valued credentials under the pilot program established pursuant to
8 P.L.2019, c.252 (C.34:15D-30 et al.); 6% shall be deposited in an
9 account of the Workforce Development Partnership Fund reserved
10 to provide employment and training services for qualified
11 disadvantaged workers, and through fiscal year 2023, not less than
12 10% of the revenues deposited in that account shall be reserved to
13 provide employment and training services to qualified
14 disadvantaged workers in the pursuit of industry-valued credentials
15 under the pilot program established pursuant to P.L.2019, c.252
16 (C.34:15D-30 et al.); 37% shall be deposited in an account of the
17 Workforce Development Partnership Fund reserved for and
18 appropriated to the Office of Customized Training; 5% shall be
19 deposited in an account of the Workforce Development Partnership
20 Fund reserved for the Youth Transitions to Work Partnership
21 created pursuant to P.L.1993, c.268 (C.34:15E-1 et seq.); 3% shall
22 be deposited in an account of the Workforce Development
23 Partnership Fund reserved for occupational safety and health
24 training; 5% shall be deposited in an account of the Workforce
25 Development Partnership Fund reserved for and appropriated to the
26 Talent Network Program established pursuant to section 2 of
27 P.L.2019, c.125 (C.34:15D-29); 3% shall be deposited in an account
28 of the Workforce Development Partnership Fund reserved for the
29 New Jersey Innovation and Research Fellowship Program
30 established pursuant to section 3 of P.L.2015, c.235 (C.34:15D-26);
31 10% shall be deposited in an account of the Workforce
32 Development Partnership Fund reserved for administrative costs as
33 defined in section 3 of P.L.1992, c.43 (C.34:15D-3); 0.5% shall be
34 deposited in an account of the Workforce Development Partnership
35 Fund reserved for the State Employment and Training Commission
36 to design criteria and conduct an annual evaluation of the program;
37 and 5.5% shall be deposited in an account of the Workforce
38 Development Partnership Fund to be used, pursuant to the
39 provisions of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as
40 this bill), to pay the fee for an adult education assessment exam,
41 and, at the discretion of the commissioner, for any of the purposes
42 indicated in subsection a. of section 4 of P.L.1992, c.43 (C.34:15D-
43 4).

44 c. Beginning January 1, 1995, through June 30, 2002, the
45 balance in the fund as of the previous December 31, as determined
46 in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, shall
47 not exceed 1.5 times the amount of contributions deposited for the
48 calendar year then ended. If the balance exceeds this amount, the

1 excess shall be deposited into the unemployment compensation
2 fund within seven business days of the date that the determination is
3 made.

4 d. Beginning July 1, 2002, and for any subsequent fiscal year,
5 if the unexpended cash balance in any of the accounts indicated in
6 subsection b. of this section, except for the account reserved for the
7 Talent Network Program, less any amount awarded in grants but not
8 yet disbursed from the account, is determined to exceed 20% of the
9 amount of contributions collected for deposit in the account
10 pursuant to this subsection during the fiscal year then ended, the
11 excess shall be regarded as an unemployment compensation
12 contribution and deposited into the unemployment compensation
13 fund within seven business days of the date that the determination is
14 made. If the unexpended cash balance in the account reserved for
15 the Talent Network Program, less any amount awarded in grants but
16 not yet disbursed from the account, is determined to exceed 20% of
17 the amount of contributions collected for deposit in the account
18 pursuant to this subsection during the fiscal year then ended, the
19 excess shall be deposited into the Workforce Development
20 Partnership Fund account reserved for the Office of Customized
21 Training.

22 (cf: P.L.2019, c.252, s.3)

23

24 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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29 This bill requires that the State Board of Education, within six
30 months of the bill's effective date, establish a program to pay the
31 high school equivalency exam fees on behalf of low-income
32 individuals. The bill defines a low-income individual as one who
33 lives in a household in which the household income is not greater
34 than 185 percent of the most recent federal poverty guidelines. The
35 program would not provide payment for more than one exam for an
36 individual. The State cost of the fees would be paid from the
37 portion of the Workforce Development Partnership Fund that is
38 currently used to fund, at the discretion of the Commissioner of
39 Labor and Workforce Development, the purposes enumerated in
40 subsection a. of section 4 of P.L.1992, c.43 (C.34:15D-4).

41 The State board currently accepts three exams as the basis for
42 awarding a State-issued high school diploma to an individual: 1) the
43 GED, which costs \$120; 2) Hi-SET, which costs \$90; and TASC,
44 which costs \$92.