

SENATE, No. 2743

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JULY 28, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator SANDRA B. CUNNINGHAM

District 31 (Hudson)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senators Singleton, Diegnan, Ruiz and Pou

SYNOPSIS

Establishes Community College Opportunity Grant Program in Higher Education Student Assistance Authority to provide last-dollar financial aid grants to county college students and Student Success Incentive funding to county colleges.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 10/19/2020)

1 **AN ACT** concerning financial aid for county college students and
2 supplementing chapter 71B of Title 18A of the New Jersey
3 Statutes.

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

7
8 1. As used in this act:

9 “Annual adjusted gross income” means:

10 a. for a dependent student, the annual adjusted gross income of
11 the student’s parent or legal guardian, as reported on the student’s
12 Free Application for Federal Student Aid or other financial aid
13 form; and

14 b. for an independent student, the annual adjusted gross income
15 of the student and, if applicable, the spouse of the student, as
16 reported on the student’s Free Application for Federal Student Aid
17 or other financial aid form.

18 “Approved educational fees” means general education fees,
19 registration fees, facility fees, technology fees, laboratory fees,
20 student service and activity fees, and program and course fees,
21 including fees associated with coursework in nursing, culinary, and
22 other career and technical education programs as determined by the
23 Higher Education Student Assistance Authority in consultation with
24 the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education.

25 “Authority” means the Higher Education Student Assistance
26 Authority established pursuant to N.J.S.18A:71A-3.

27 “Home county college” means the county college that serves a
28 student’s county of residence.

29 “Out-of-county college” means a county college that is outside
30 of a student’s county of residence.

31 “Program” means the Community College Opportunity Grant
32 Program created pursuant to section 2 of this act.

33 “Three plus one degree program” means a baccalaureate degree
34 program created pursuant to section 1 of P.L.2018, c.144
35 (C.18A:3B-78).

36
37 2. There is hereby created the Community College Opportunity
38 Grant Program. The purpose of the program shall be to provide
39 financial aid grants to eligible county college students, to cover the
40 costs of tuition and approved educational fees that are not already
41 covered by any other State, federal, and institutional need-based
42 grants or merit scholarships and to provide county colleges with
43 Student Success Incentive funding for outreach and student success
44 initiatives. The financial aid grants distributed to eligible students
45 under the program shall be administered by the Higher Education
46 Student Assistance Authority, while the Student Success Incentive
47 funding distributed to county colleges under the program shall be
48 administered by the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education.

1 3. a. To be eligible to receive a financial aid grant under the
2 Community College Opportunity Grant Program, a student shall:

3 (1) be a legal resident of the State in accordance with the
4 provisions of N.J.S.18A:71B-2 or be eligible for student financial
5 aid pursuant to P.L.2018, c.12 (C.18A:71B-2.1);

6 (2) be enrolled in at least six credits at a county college
7 established pursuant to chapter 64A of Title 18A of the New Jersey
8 Statutes;

9 (3) be enrolled at the county college that serves the student's
10 county of residence, except that a student may receive a grant under
11 the program to cover the remaining costs of tuition and approved
12 educational fees, charged at the in-district rate for the home county
13 college, to attend a county college outside of the county of
14 residence;

15 (4) not have an annual adjusted gross income that is negative;

16 (5) have an annual adjusted gross income between \$0 and
17 \$65,000, except that the authority, in consultation with the Office of
18 the Secretary of Higher Education and the New Jersey Council of
19 County Colleges, may annually establish maximum annual adjusted
20 gross income eligibility limits of no less than \$65,000;

21 (6) have applied for all other available forms of State, federal,
22 and institutional need-based grants and merit scholarships and, in
23 accordance with annually established deadline dates, have
24 completed and submitted a Free Application for Federal Student
25 Aid, other financial aid form, or, as applicable, a State financial aid
26 form as required by the authority pursuant to subsection b. of
27 section 1 of P.L.2018, c.12 (C.18A:71B-2.1);

28 (7) not owe a refund on a grant or scholarship previously
29 received from a State or federal program through any institution or
30 be in default on any loan made under any State or federal student
31 loan program at any institution, unless the student makes
32 arrangements with the authority to repay the debt; and

33 (8) be in good academic standing and meet the minimum
34 standards for academic performance and satisfactory academic
35 progress as defined by the county college which the student is
36 attending.

37 A county college shall not impose additional eligibility
38 requirements for the program, other than the requirements set forth
39 in this subsection.

40 b. A grant under the program may be renewed for a student
41 who:

42 (1) annually completes and submits a Free Application for
43 Federal Student Aid, other financial aid form, or, as applicable, a
44 State financial aid form as required by the authority pursuant to
45 subsection b. of section 1 of P.L.2018, c.12 (C.18A:71B-2.1);

46 (2) meets the standards for academic performance and
47 satisfactory academic progress, as defined by the county college
48 which the student is attending, to determine eligibility for federal

1 student aid programs under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of
2 1965 or, in the semester immediately prior to receiving an award,
3 attains a minimum level of academic success as determined by the
4 authority; and

5 (3) maintains all eligibility requirements established pursuant to
6 subsection a. of this section.

7 c. (1) A student shall be eligible for a grant under the program
8 for up to five semesters, unless the student is enrolled in a program
9 regularly requiring at least six semesters for completion, in which
10 case the authority shall permit up to six semesters of eligibility.

11 (2) A student enrolled in a three plus one degree program shall
12 be eligible for a grant under the program for up to six semesters.

13 (3) Semesters for which a student is enrolled in at least six
14 credits but less than 12 credits shall be counted as one-half of a full-
15 time semester.

16 d. A student may be eligible for a grant under the program
17 during a fall, spring, or summer semester in an academic year.

18 e. If a student, the student's family, or a county college deems
19 that the authority made an unfair determination of eligibility, an
20 appeal may be filed with the authority within 60 days of initial
21 notification of eligibility or ineligibility.

22 f. The county college which a student attends shall notify the
23 student of the student's eligibility for the program and the amount
24 of the grant.

25
26 4. a. A grant distributed to an eligible student under the
27 Community College Opportunity Grant Program shall cover the
28 remaining cost of tuition and approved educational fees, which is
29 not covered by State, federal, or any other need-based grant or merit
30 scholarship, for up to 18 credits in any semester. The full amount
31 of State, federal, and institutional need-based grant or merit
32 scholarships received by an eligible student shall be applied to the
33 amount of tuition and approved educational fees charged to an
34 eligible student. The remaining balance of tuition and approved
35 educational fees shall be covered by a grant under the program.

36 b. A full award under the program to a student at a county
37 college shall be equal to the student's full cost of approved tuition
38 and approved educational fees, subject to the prior application of all
39 other State, federal, and institutional need-based grants and merit
40 scholarships against those costs, for up to 18 credits in any
41 semester, for an eligible student for a full-time semester in an
42 associate's degree, certificate, or three plus one degree program.
43 For an eligible student enrolled in at least six credits but less than
44 12 credits in an associate's degree, certificate, or three plus one
45 degree program, a grant under the program shall be pro-rated from
46 the full-time approved tuition and approved educational fees based
47 on the number of credits for which that student is enrolled.

1 c. The authority shall, for each county college, annually
2 establish a maximum individual grant amount awarded under the
3 program. The maximum individual grant amount for each county
4 college shall not increase by more than three percent over the prior
5 year.

6
7 5. a. The Legislature shall annually appropriate to the Office
8 of the Secretary of Higher Education such funds as may be
9 necessary for Student Success Incentive funding to provide
10 capacity-building grants to each county college to support the goals
11 of the Community College Opportunity Grant Program. The
12 Secretary of Higher Education shall distribute funding made
13 available pursuant to this section to county colleges for outreach,
14 recruitment, and promoting the success of county college students.
15 The secretary shall establish the purposes for which a county
16 college may use a grant received pursuant to this section, which
17 shall include, but not be limited to:

18 (1) establishing mentorship programs;

19 (2) hosting events to assist students and families in completing
20 financial aid applications; and

21 (3) addressing students' material hardships, such as lack of
22 access to food, medical care, housing, child care, and transportation.

23 b. The secretary shall distribute the funding made available
24 pursuant to this section. Fifty percent of the appropriation shall be
25 distributed equally among all of the county colleges, while the
26 remaining fifty percent of the appropriation shall be distributed
27 based on the total number of students at each county college who
28 received awards under the program during the previous academic
29 year.

30
31 6. The authority shall adopt in accordance with the
32 "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et
33 seq.), rules and regulations as may be necessary to implement the
34 provisions of sections 1 through 4 of this act. The Office of the
35 Secretary of Higher Education shall adopt in accordance with the
36 "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et
37 seq.), rules and regulations as may be necessary to implement the
38 provisions of section 5 of this act.

39
40 7. This act shall take effect immediately and shall first apply to
41 the first full academic year following the date of enactment.

42 43 44 STATEMENT

45
46 This bill establishes the Community College Opportunity Grant
47 (CCOG) Program, which is to be administered by the Higher
48 Education Student Assistance Authority. The purpose of the

1 program is to provide last-dollar grants to eligible county college
2 students, to pay for the remaining costs of tuition and approved
3 educational fees that are not already covered by any other State,
4 federal, and institutional need-based grants and merit scholarships
5 for which a grant recipient is eligible. The program would also
6 provide county colleges with Student Success Incentive funding for
7 outreach and student success initiatives.

8 To be eligible for grants under the CCOG program, a student is
9 required to: be a legal resident of the State or, for undocumented
10 students, be eligible for student financial aid pursuant to
11 P.L.2018, c.12 (C.18A:71B-2.1); be enrolled in at least six credits
12 at a county college in the State; be enrolled at the county college
13 that serves the student's county of residence, although a student
14 attending an out-of-county college may receive a grant to cover
15 tuition and approved educational fees charged at the in-district rate
16 for the student's home county college; have an annual adjusted
17 gross income between \$0 and \$65,000, except that the authority, in
18 consultation with the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education
19 and the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, may annually
20 establish maximum annual adjusted gross income eligibility limits
21 of no less than \$65,000; have applied for all other available forms
22 of State, federal, and institutional need-based grants and merit
23 scholarships and completed and submitted a financial aid form; not
24 owe a refund on a grant or scholarship previously received from a
25 State or federal program through any institution or be in default on
26 any loan made under any State or federal student loan program at
27 any institution, unless the student makes arrangements with the
28 authority to repay the debt; and be in good academic standing and
29 meet the minimum standards for academic performance and
30 satisfactory academic progress as defined by the county college
31 which the student is attending.

32 A student will be eligible for a grant under the program for up to
33 five semesters, unless the student is enrolled in a program regularly
34 requiring at least six semesters for completion, in which case the
35 authority will permit up to six semesters of eligibility. A student
36 enrolled in a three plus one degree program will be eligible for a
37 grant under the program for up to six semesters.

38 The bill also directs the Legislature to annually appropriate funds
39 to the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) to
40 provide Student Success Incentive funding to each county college
41 for outreach and student success initiatives and to support the goals
42 of the Community College Opportunity Grant Program. The
43 funding may be used to fund initiatives, such as establishing
44 mentorship programs; hosting events to assist students and families
45 in completing financial aid applications; and addressing students'
46 material hardships, such as lack of access to food, medical care,
47 housing, child care, and transportation.