

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 2743

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JULY 28, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator SANDRA B. CUNNINGHAM

District 31 (Hudson)

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex)

Co-Sponsored by:

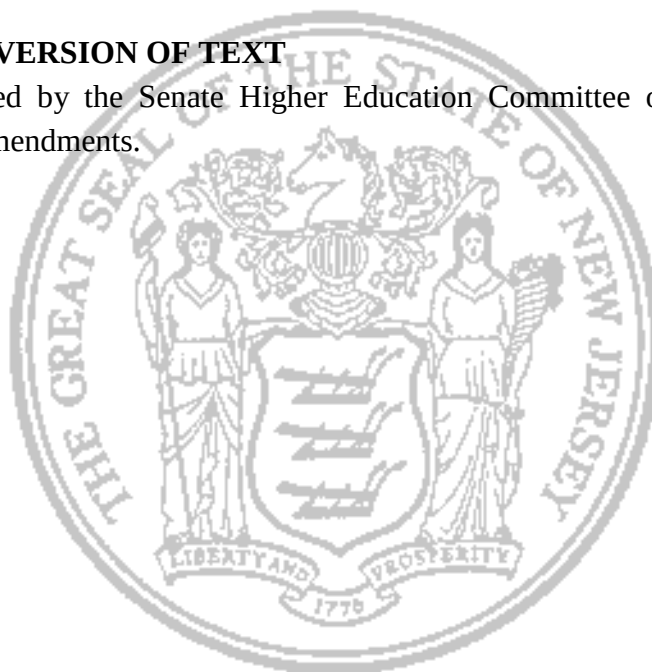
Senators Singleton, Diegnan and Pou

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 reported by the Senate Higher Education Committee on October 19, 2020, with amendments.



(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 ¹, subject to the limit
25 of funds appropriated or otherwise made available for the program¹.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹Senate SHI committee amendments adopted October 19, 2020.

1 under the program shall be administered by the Higher Education
2 Student Assistance Authority, while the Student Success Incentive
3 funding distributed to county colleges under the program shall be
4 administered by the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education.

5
6 3. a. To be eligible to receive a financial aid grant under the
7 Community College Opportunity Grant Program, a student shall:

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

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

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

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

21 (5) have an annual adjusted gross income between \$0 and
22 \$65,000, except that the authority, in consultation with the Office of
23 the Secretary of Higher Education and the New Jersey Council of
24 County Colleges, may annually establish maximum annual adjusted
25 gross income eligibility limits of no less than \$65,000;

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

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

38 (8) be in good academic standing and meet the minimum
39 standards for academic performance and satisfactory academic
40 progress as defined by the county college which the student is
41 attending.

42 A county college shall not impose additional eligibility
43 requirements for the program, other than the requirements set forth
44 in this subsection.

45 b. A grant under the program may be renewed for a student
46 who:

47 (1) annually completes and submits a Free Application for
48 Federal Student Aid, other financial aid form, or, as applicable, a

1 State financial aid form as required by the authority pursuant to
2 subsection b. of section 1 of P.L.2018, c.12 (C.18A:71B-2.1);

3 (2) meets the standards for academic performance and
4 satisfactory academic progress, as defined by the county college
5 which the student is attending, to determine eligibility for federal
6 student aid programs under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of
7 1965 or, in the semester immediately prior to receiving an award,
8 attains a minimum level of academic success as determined by the
9 authority; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

27 f. The county college which a student attends shall notify the
28 student of the student's eligibility for the program and the amount
29 of the grant.

30

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

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

1 12 credits in an associate's degree, certificate, or three plus one
2 degree program, a grant under the program shall be pro-rated from
3 the full-time approved tuition and approved educational fees based
4 on the number of credits for which that student is enrolled.

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

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

22 (1) establishing mentorship programs;

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

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

27 b. The secretary shall distribute the funding made available
28 pursuant to this section. 'The secretary may retain up to five percent
29 of the funding for grant administration activities designed to increase
30 the effectiveness of the program.' Fifty percent of the 'remaining'
31 appropriation shall be distributed equally among all of the county
32 colleges, while the '[remaining] other' fifty percent of the
33 'remaining' appropriation shall be distributed based on the total
34 number of students at each county college who received awards
35 under the program during the previous academic year.

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

45
46 7. This act shall take effect immediately and shall first apply to
47 the first full academic year following the date of enactment.