

SENATE, No. 3589

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 25, 2021

Sponsored by:

Senator PATRICK J. DIEGNAN, JR.

District 18 (Middlesex)

SYNOPSIS

Extends eligibility for NJ STARS Program to students academically ranked in top third of class.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT concerning the NJ STARS Program and amending
2 P.L.2004, c.59 and P.L.2009, c.280.

3

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

6

7 1. Section 5 of P.L.2004, c.59 (C.18A:71B-85) is amended to
8 read as follows:

9 5. a. A scholarship under the NJ STARS Program shall cover
10 the full cost of tuition, subject to the prior application of other
11 grants and scholarships against those costs as provided under
12 paragraph (2) of subsection c. of this section, for up to 18 credit
13 hours in any semester, for an eligible student enrolled in a full-time
14 course of study at the New Jersey county college serving the
15 student's county of residence. An otherwise eligible student who
16 demonstrates to the authority, in accordance with such criteria and
17 by means of such documentation as the authority shall establish by
18 regulation, that the county college serving the student's county of
19 residence does not offer the curriculum that the student chooses to
20 study shall be eligible for such scholarship at another New Jersey
21 county college offering that curriculum. The amount of any
22 scholarship allowed hereunder to a student at a county college
23 serving a county other than the student's county of residence shall
24 be computed as though the student were a resident of the county
25 served by that college, and the college shall likewise compute the
26 amount of any additional payment, required with respect to the
27 enrollment of that student for credit hours of study during a
28 semester in which the scholarship is awarded that are not covered
29 by that scholarship, as though the student were a resident of the
30 county.

31 b. A student shall be eligible for a scholarship under the NJ
32 STARS Program for up to five semesters, including summer
33 sessions. The scholarship shall be payable for the first year of
34 enrollment in a county college to a student who:

35 (1) has graduated high school and, in the case of a student who
36 graduates in the 2013-2014 school year and thereafter, whose class
37 rank at the completion of the 11th grade or 12th grade was in the
38 top **【15.0%】** third of the student's high school class, provided that
39 in the case of students graduating from high schools that do not
40 calculate the class rank of their students, the student's ranking at the
41 completion of the 11th grade or 12th grade shall be determined by
42 the high school in consultation with the authority; and

43 (2) completed a rigorous high school course of study in
44 accordance with standards established by the Secretary of Higher
45 Education in consultation with the Commissioner of Education.

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 During a student's enrollment in a county college after the first
2 year of enrollment, the scholarship shall be payable to that student
3 if the student attains a grade point average of at least 3.0 by the start
4 of the student's second year of county college enrollment. A
5 student who attains a grade point average of less than 3.0 at the start
6 of the second semester of the student's first year of county college
7 enrollment shall participate in an enrichment program designed by
8 the county college during the second semester of the student's first
9 year of enrollment.

10 c. To be eligible to receive a scholarship under the NJ STARS
11 Program a student shall:

12 (1) be a State resident pursuant to guidelines established by the
13 authority. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 1 of P.L.1979,
14 c.361 (C.18A:62-4) or any other section of law to the contrary, a
15 dependent child of a parent or guardian who has been transferred to
16 a military installation located in this State shall be considered a
17 resident of this State for the purposes of qualifying for an NJ
18 STARS scholarship;

19 (2) have applied for all other available forms of State and
20 federal need-based grants and merit scholarships, exclusive of
21 loans, the full amount of which grants and scholarships shall be
22 applied to tuition to reduce the amount of any scholarship that the
23 student shall receive under the provisions of this act;

24 (3) except as otherwise provided pursuant to subsection a. or
25 subsection c. of section 3 of P.L.2008, c.124 (C.18A:71B-85.2), be
26 enrolled in a full-time course of study at a New Jersey county
27 college;

28 (4) have graduated from high school in 2004 or later, and not
29 earlier than the calendar year two years prior to the first calendar
30 year in which a scholarship payment is to be made; and

31 (5) except as otherwise provided pursuant to subsection a. of
32 section 3 of P.L.2008, c.124 (C.18A:71B-85.2), maintain
33 continuous enrollment in a full-time course of study, unless on
34 medical leave due to the illness of the student or a member of the
35 student's immediate family or emergency leave because of a family
36 emergency, which medical or emergency leave shall have been
37 approved by the county college, or unless called to partial or full
38 mobilization for State or federal active duty as a member of the
39 National Guard or a Reserve component of the Armed Forces of the
40 United States.

41 d. A student who is dismissed for academic or disciplinary
42 reasons from a county college shall no longer be eligible for a
43 scholarship under this act. If a student participating in the program
44 is dismissed for disciplinary reasons, the student shall repay in full
45 all amounts received under the program. The county college shall
46 be responsible for collecting the repayment, or the amount of any
47 overpayment or other improper payment, of any State awards under

1 the program, in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.18A:71B-
2 10.

3 e. A student scholarship under the NJ STARS Program may be
4 renewed upon the student's filing of a renewal financial aid
5 application and providing evidence that the student has satisfied the
6 requirements pursuant to subsection b. of this section.
7 (cf: P.L.2017, c.360, s.1)
8

9 2. Section 1 of P.L.2009, c.280 (C.18A:71B-85.5) is amended
10 to read as follows:

11 1. a. In September of each school year, the board of education
12 of a school district or the chief school administrator of a nonpublic
13 school shall provide each student in the 9th grade with general
14 information on the New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward
15 Scholarship (NJ STARS) Program created pursuant to P.L.2004,
16 c.59 (C.18A:71B-81 et seq.).

17 b. In September of each school year, the board of education of
18 a school district or the chief school administrator of a nonpublic
19 school shall notify each student in the 11th grade who is ranked in
20 the top **【25.0%】 45 percent** of the class of his potential to qualify
21 for the NJ STARS Program if the student's class rank at the
22 completion of the 11th grade or 12th grade is within the top
23 **【15.0%】 third** of the class.

24 The notification shall include information about the rigorous
25 course of study required to qualify for the program.

26 A student in the 12th grade shall be notified of conditional
27 eligibility for the NJ STARS Program by the Higher Education
28 Student Assistance Authority in accordance with the provisions of
29 section 2 of P.L.2008, c.124 (C.18A:71B-85.1).

30 c. The notification by the board of education or chief school
31 administrator required pursuant to subsections a. and b. of this
32 section shall be communicated via regular or electronic mail or sent
33 home with the student and include a brief description of the NJ
34 STARS Program and the requirements for eligibility for the
35 program.

36 (cf: P.L.2014, c.55, s.2)
37

38 3. This act shall take effect immediately.
39
40

41 STATEMENT

42
43 This bill extends eligibility for the NJ STARS Program to
44 students who are academically ranked in the top third of their class.
45 Under current law, only the top 15 percent of students are eligible
46 for the NJ STARS Program.

47 The bill also requires that the board of education of a school
48 district or the chief school administrator of a nonpublic school

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1 notify each student in the 11th grade who is ranked in the top 45
2 percent of the class of his or her potential to qualify for the NJ
3 STARS Program if the student's class rank at the completion of the
4 11th grade or 12th grade is within the top third of the class. Under
5 current law, this notice is only provided to those students who are in
6 the top 25 percent of the class.