

**SENATE CONCURRENT
RESOLUTION No. 44**

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JANUARY 30, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex)

Senator SANDRA B. CUNNINGHAM

District 31 (Hudson)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senator T.Kean

SYNOPSIS

Urges Secretary of Higher Education and Educational Opportunity Fund Board to study and modernize program regulations, particularly regulations related to student funding priority levels.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/22/2020)

1 **A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION** urging the Secretary of Higher
2 Education and the Educational Opportunity Fund Board of
3 Directors to examine certain regulations governing the
4 Educational Opportunity Fund program.
5
6 **WHEREAS,** The Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) program,
7 established in 1968 under P.L.1968, c.142 (C.18A:71-28 et seq.),
8 supports educationally and economically disadvantaged students for
9 undergraduate and graduate study at public and private institutions
10 of higher education in New Jersey; and
11 **WHEREAS,** The EOF program, which is administered by the State’s
12 Secretary of Higher Education and governed by the EOF Board of
13 Directors, in part provides direct financial aid to students through
14 Opportunity Grants, which assist students in meeting college
15 expenses, such as fees, books, room, board, and transportation, that
16 are not covered by the State’s Tuition Aid Grant program; and
17 **WHEREAS,** While the EOF program benefits thousands of New Jersey
18 students each year, regulations governing the EOF program do not
19 adequately account for certain changes in the State’s current
20 education policy, specifically those changes that encourage
21 participation in dual enrollment and other college readiness
22 programs while in high school; and
23 **WHEREAS,** Current State law requires public colleges, and permits
24 school districts, to provide opportunities for dual enrollment
25 programs in which high schools partner with an institution of higher
26 education to offer coursework that can be applied toward
27 completion of a postsecondary degree; and
28 **WHEREAS,** Current EOF regulations specify that institutions are to
29 award Opportunity Grant funds to students in the following priority
30 order: 1) renewal students who were awarded funds during the
31 previous academic year; 2) first-time, full-time freshmen; 3) EOF
32 transfer students who received an EOF student grant at another
33 institution, in the preceding academic year; 4) renewal students
34 readmitted or returning to the program who did not receive awards
35 in the prior academic year; and 5) eligible students who do not fall
36 into any of the other four categories; and
37 **WHEREAS,** Under the regulations, a high school graduate who has, for
38 example, earned an associate degree through participation in a dual
39 enrollment program is not considered a “first-year student” and is
40 thus considered in the lowest EOF funding priority level as opposed
41 to being considered in the second funding priority level if the
42 student had not attained an associate degree in high school; and
43 **WHEREAS,** The current funding priority structure, then, may cause
44 high school graduates who have earned associate degrees through
45 dual enrollment programs to receive lower EOF grants or to be
46 precluded from certain institutions’ EOF programs altogether; and
47 **WHEREAS,** The structure creates a disincentive for high school
48 students to earn associate degrees and may deter participation in

1 dual enrollment and other college readiness programs that the
2 Legislature and several administrations have strived to establish and
3 encourage; and

4 **WHEREAS,** In addition to dual enrollment programs, there are several
5 other programs in New Jersey that offer the opportunity for students
6 to prepare for college or earn college credit while in high school,
7 including Advanced Placement courses, College Readiness Now,
8 College Bound, Governor's Schools, Pathways in Technology
9 Early College (P-TECH) High Schools, and vocational-technical
10 schools; and

11 **WHEREAS,** The disadvantage created for dual enrollment high school
12 students and other students who have earned associate degrees in
13 high school shows a disconnect between the EOF regulations and
14 current policy goals of the State to expand educational access while
15 increasing affordability and further raises a concern that other areas
16 of the regulations may also be misaligned; and

17 **WHEREAS,** To ensure fair treatment of high school students entering
18 college with 24 or more college credits, it is fitting and proper that
19 the Legislature of the State of New Jersey urge the Secretary of
20 Higher Education and the EOF Board of Directors to conduct a
21 study of current EOF regulations to review the current EOF funding
22 priority structure, evaluate all EOF regulations to identify any other
23 similar conflicts impacting students who participate in college
24 readiness programs, and examine ways in which the regulations can
25 be modernized to reflect the State's current educational policy
26 goals; and

27 **WHEREAS,** Furthermore, the Legislature urges the secretary to share
28 with the Senate Higher Education Committee and the Assembly
29 Higher Education Committee the findings of the study and to detail
30 the steps that will be taken to address the hereinabove stated
31 concerns; now, therefore,

32
33 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Senate of the State of New Jersey (the
34 General Assembly concurring):

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36 1. The New Jersey Legislature respectfully urges the Secretary
37 of Higher Education and the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF)
38 Board of Directors to conduct a study of current regulations
39 governing the EOF program, particularly provisions that allow
40 students who earned associate degrees through participation in dual
41 enrollment or other college readiness programs to receive lower
42 EOF funding support or to be precluded from institutions' EOF
43 programs altogether. The secretary and the board are also
44 respectfully urged to evaluate all EOF regulations to identify any
45 other potential conflicts with encouraging participation in college
46 readiness programs, and examine ways in which the regulations can
47 be modernized to reflect the State's current educational policy
48 goals. The secretary is respectfully urged to share with the Senate

1 Higher Education Committee and the Assembly Higher Education
2 Committee the findings of the study and to detail the steps that will
3 be taken to address the concerns related to the EOF program.

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5 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
6 shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly or the
7 Secretary of the Senate to the Secretary of Higher Education and to
8 each member of the Educational Opportunity Fund Board of
9 Directors.

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12 STATEMENT

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14 The Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) program, established
15 by State law in 1968, supports educationally and economically
16 disadvantaged students for undergraduate and graduate study at
17 public and private institutions of higher education in New Jersey.
18 The EOF program, in part, provides direct financial aid to students
19 through Opportunity Grants, which assist students in meeting
20 college expenses, such as fees, books, room, board, and
21 transportation, that are not covered by the State's Tuition Aid Grant
22 program.

23 Current EOF regulations specify that institutions are to award
24 Opportunity Grant funds to students in the following priority order:
25 1) renewal students who were given awards during the previous
26 academic year; 2) first-time, full-time freshmen; 3) EOF transfer
27 students who received an EOF student grant at another institution,
28 in the preceding academic year; 4) renewal students readmitted or
29 returning to the program who did not receive awards in the prior
30 academic year; and 5) eligible students who do not fall into any of
31 the other four categories. Under this structure, a high school
32 graduate who has, for example, earned an associate degree through
33 participation in a dual enrollment program is not considered a "first-
34 year student" and is thus placed in the lowest EOF funding priority
35 level as opposed to being considered in the second funding priority
36 level if the student had not attained an associate degree. The
37 structure creates a disincentive for students to participate in dual
38 enrollment and other college readiness programs.

39 This resolution urges the Secretary of Higher Education and the
40 Educational Opportunity Fund Board of Directors, who respectively
41 administer and govern the program, to study and modernize current
42 EOF regulations, specifically regulations that negatively impact
43 students who have earned 24 or more college credits while in high
44 school. Dual enrollment programs allow high schools to partner
45 with an institution of higher education to offer coursework that can
46 be applied toward completion of a postsecondary degree.