
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 108 Session of
2007

INTRODUCED BY STAIRS, CALTAGIRONE, CARROLL, DALEY, DeLUCA,
GALLOWAY, GEORGE, GRUCELA, HENNESSEY, HESS, HORNAMAN,
HUTCHINSON, KULA, MOYER, PHILLIPS, PYLE, REICHLEY, SCAVELLO,
WALKO AND YOUNGBLOOD, JANUARY 30, 2007

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, JANUARY 30, 2007

AN ACT

1 Establishing the Pennsylvania Scholastic Achievement Award to
2 recognize deserving Pennsylvania students and to motivate
3 such students to attend qualified eligible institutions in
4 this Commonwealth by providing them with a full tuition
5 scholarship or a scholarship of an equivalent dollar amount.

6 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
7 hereby enacts as follows:

8 Section 1. Short title.

9 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Pennsylvania
10 Scholastic Achievement Award Act.

11 Section 2. Purpose.

12 The Pennsylvania Scholastic Achievement Award is hereby
13 established within the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance
14 Agency to recognize students' academic achievements and to
15 reward them for their academic excellence by providing them with
16 full tuition scholarship awards to attend an eligible
17 institution in this Commonwealth.

18 Section 3. Definitions.

1 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
2 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
3 context clearly indicates otherwise:

4 "Agency." The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance
5 Agency.

6 "Award." A full tuition scholarship or its equivalent dollar
7 scholarship to an eligible institution under this act.

8 "Eligible institution." A State-owned college or university
9 that is authorized by the Department of Education to provide
10 approved courses of study and grant degrees.

11 "Fund." The Pennsylvania Scholastic Achievement Award Fund
12 established under section 9.

13 "School entity." A public school district, joint school,
14 charter school or area vocational-technical school.

15 Section 4. Selection process.

16 (a) Criteria and procedures.--The agency shall adopt a
17 policy setting the criteria and procedures to be used in
18 selecting award recipients. The criteria and procedures shall
19 reflect academic achievement and, at a minimum, require that
20 students:

21 (1) Be a current 12th-grade student enrolled at a
22 Commonwealth school entity.

23 (2) Be domiciled in this Commonwealth.

24 (3) Hold a 3.0 grade point average, on a scale of 4.0,
25 by the end of the student's junior year of high school.

26 (4) Attain a composite score of 1000 or higher on the
27 Scholastic Aptitude Test, or a minimum composite score of 21
28 on the American College Test.

29 (5) Rank academically in the top 5% of the student's
30 graduating class.

1 (6) Attain proficiency in reading, writing and
2 mathematics on either the Pennsylvania System of School
3 Assessment test administered in grade 11 or 12 or local
4 assessment aligned with academic standards and State
5 assessments.

6 (7) Be accepted for admission as a full-time student in
7 the fall term at an eligible institution immediately
8 following high school graduation.

9 (b) Application.--Eligible high school students who are
10 enrolled in a school entity and who wish to apply for an award
11 must submit an application to the agency as well as file the
12 Free Application for Federal Student Aid at the appropriate
13 time.

14 (c) Nature of eligibility.--The Pennsylvania Scholastic
15 Achievement Award shall be a merit-based program, and the agency
16 shall not base eligibility on income requirements.

17 Section 5. Full tuition scholarship award.

18 (a) Calculation of award.--The agency shall be responsible
19 for calculating the amount of each student's award, and each
20 award recipient shall receive a full-tuition scholarship or an
21 equivalent dollar scholarship to the eligible institution at
22 which the award recipient has been accepted for full-time
23 admission. The award may apply toward qualifying higher
24 education expenses, including tuition, books and fees of the
25 institution at which the award recipient has been accepted.

26 (b) Period of time before using scholarship.--Should an
27 award recipient decide to defer enrollment at the institution at
28 which the award recipient has been accepted because the award
29 recipient has enlisted in the military, the award recipient
30 shall have two years following discharge from active military

1 service in which to use the award.

2 Section 6. Renewal requirements.

3 (a) Agency.--The agency shall establish renewal eligibility
4 requirements. At a minimum, these requirements shall require the
5 maintenance of:

6 (1) Full-time enrollment at an eligible institution and
7 a minimum grade point average of 3.0 or higher on a scale of
8 4.0 or its equivalent.

9 (2) Satisfactory academic progress toward completion of
10 a course of study.

11 (b) Renewal period.--Each award is renewable annually for a
12 period not to exceed an additional three academic years beyond
13 the first year of the award, except for bona fide five-year
14 majors.

15 (c) Maintenance of requirements.--Upon receiving an award,
16 each award recipient shall enter into a written agreement with
17 the agency to:

18 (1) Satisfy all degree, diploma or certificate
19 requirements and other requirements under this act.

20 (2) Commence employment in this Commonwealth no later
21 than one year after completion of an approved bachelor's or
22 associate's degree or certificate program for a period of one
23 calendar year for each academic year during which the student
24 received an award, unless the agency determines that there
25 are extenuating circumstances, including approved medical or
26 personal leave of absence.

27 (3) Reimburse the Commonwealth all amounts received
28 under this act and interest thereon, as determined by the
29 agency, if the student fails to comply with paragraphs (1)
30 and (2).

1 Section 7. Powers and duties of agency.--In addition to setting
2 the criteria and procedures for the selection process and award
3 renewals, the agency shall:

4 (1) Prepare and supervise the issuance of public
5 information concerning the provisions of the award.

6 (2) Prescribe the form, set time limits and regulate the
7 submission of applications from eligible high school
8 students.

9 (3) Establish procedures for making the initial award to
10 the recipients and for annual renewal of the awards.

11 (4) Disburse awards from funds specifically appropriated
12 for the purposes of this act.

13 (5) Adopt rules and regulations to implement, administer
14 and enforce this act.

15 Section 8. Financial aid.

16 (a) Exclusions from taxable income.--Awards received by an
17 award recipient shall not be considered taxable income for
18 purposes of Article III of the act of March 4, 1971 (P.L.6,
19 No.2), known as the Tax Reform Code of 1971.

20 (b) Coordination of financial aid.--The agency shall
21 determine when the amount of an award may exceed the cost of an
22 education at the institution the award recipient is attending.
23 If other student aid must be adjusted due to the receipt of
24 funding under this act, loans must be reduced first, then work-
25 study or other employment and then grant or scholarship aid.

26 (c) Eligible institutions unaffected.--An award may not be
27 considered financial assistance or appropriations to the
28 eligible institutions.

29 (d) Student aid.--An award may not be used by the agency
30 when determining an applicant's eligibility and need for student

1 grant programs or other student programs administered by the
2 agency.

3 Section 9. Pennsylvania Scholastic Achievement Award Fund.

4 (a) Establishment.--The agency shall establish and
5 administer a fund to be known as the Pennsylvania Scholastic
6 Achievement Award Fund. The purpose of the fund shall be to
7 provide full tuition scholarships or scholarships of an
8 equivalent dollar amount to students who have been selected in
9 accordance with this act.

10 (b) Acceptance of funds.--The fund may accept donations and
11 contributions from all public and private sources, including the
12 Federal Government and any appropriations by the General
13 Assembly.

14 (c) Issuance of awards.--Awards shall be made to the extent
15 that moneys are available in the fund.

16 Section 10. Effective date.

17 This act shall take effect in 90 days.