
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 1786 Session of
2019

INTRODUCED BY SAINATO, BARRAR, STRUZZI, McCLINTON, YOUNGBLOOD,
CALTAGIRONE, CAUSER, PETRARCA, JAMES, READSHAW, FREEMAN,
DEASY, DAVIDSON, KIM, SCHLOSSBERG, HILL-EVANS, MADDEN,
WARREN, CIRESI, HOWARD AND KOSIEROWSKI, AUGUST 30, 2019

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS, AUGUST 30, 2019

AN ACT

1 Amending Title 35 (Health and Safety) of the Pennsylvania
2 Consolidated Statutes, in incentives for municipal volunteers
3 of fire companies and nonprofit emergency medical services
4 agencies, establishing the First Responder Loan Forgiveness
5 Program; and making editorial changes.

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

8 Section 1. Subchapter D heading of Chapter 79A of Title 35
9 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes is amended to read:

10 SUBCHAPTER D

11 [MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS] PENALTIES

12 Section 2. Chapter 79A of Title 35 is amended by adding a
13 subchapter to read:

14 SUBCHAPTER E

15 FIRST RESPONDER LOAN FORGIVENESS

16 Sec.

17 79A41. Definitions.

18 79A42. First Responder Loan Forgiveness Program.

1 79A43. Award of loan forgiveness.

2 79A44. Amount of awards.

3 79A45. Funding.

4 79A46. Administration.

5 79A47. Point system.

6 79A48. Certification.

7 79A49. Guidelines.

8 § 79A41. Definitions.

9 The following words and phrases when used in this subchapter
10 shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
11 context clearly indicates otherwise:

12 "Active first responder." A member of an emergency medical
13 services agency or a member of a volunteer fire company or
14 volunteer rescue company.

15 "Agency." The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance
16 Agency.

17 "Approved institution of higher learning." A degree-granting
18 or certificate-granting educational institution, including a
19 vocational school, that:

20 (1) offers a postsecondary program of education;

21 (2) is located in this Commonwealth; and

22 (3) is approved by the agency.

23 "Approved program of education." A curriculum or course of
24 study pursued at an approved institution of higher learning as
25 determined by the agency.

26 "Emergency medical services agency." An emergency medical
27 service corporation, association or organization which meets all
28 of the following:

29 (1) Is located in this Commonwealth.

30 (2) Is licensed by the Department of Health.

1 (3) Is regularly engaged in the provision of emergency
2 medical services, including basic life support or advanced
3 life support services and advanced life support squads as
4 defined in 28 Pa. Code § 1027.1 (relating to general
5 provisions) and licensed quick response services.

6 "Program." The First Responder Loan Forgiveness Program
7 established in section 79A42 (relating to First Responder Loan
8 Forgiveness Program).

9 "Qualified applicant." An active first responder who
10 qualifies for loan forgiveness under section 79A43 (relating to
11 award of loan forgiveness).

12 "Volunteer fire company." A nonprofit chartered corporation,
13 association or organization located in this Commonwealth which
14 provides fire protection or rescue services and which may offer
15 other voluntary emergency services within this Commonwealth.
16 Voluntary emergency services provided by a volunteer fire
17 company may include voluntary ambulance and voluntary rescue
18 services.

19 "Volunteer rescue company." A nonprofit chartered
20 corporation, association or organization located in this
21 Commonwealth that provides emergency rescue services.

22 § 79A42. First Responder Loan Forgiveness Program.

23 (a) Program established.--The First Responder Loan
24 Forgiveness Program is established. The program shall provide
25 loan forgiveness awards to qualified applicants in accordance
26 with this subchapter. The agency shall administer the program
27 for active first responders on a Statewide basis.

28 (b) Applicants.--An active first responder who meets the
29 following criteria may apply to the agency for loan forgiveness
30 under the program:

1 (1) Is a resident of this Commonwealth.

2 (2) Has been an active first responder, as certified in
3 accordance with section 79A48 (relating to certification),
4 for a period of at least one year in this Commonwealth.

5 (3) Has enrolled as a student in an approved program of
6 education.

7 (4) Provides the approved institution of higher learning
8 with a sworn or official statement by the Office of the State
9 Fire Commissioner or the chief or president of the emergency
10 medical services agency, attesting that the applicant is a
11 member in good standing of the emergency medical services
12 agency, volunteer fire company or volunteer rescue company.

13 § 79A43. Award of loan forgiveness.

14 The agency may provide loan forgiveness for an active first
15 responder who, in the first year as an active first responder
16 following completion of a postsecondary degree or certification
17 program and, in each subsequent year, meets all of the following
18 criteria:

19 (1) Is a recipient of an agency-administered, federally
20 insured student loan.

21 (2) Has completed a certificate or degree program at an
22 approved institution of higher learning. The certificate or
23 degree program must be an approved program of education.

24 (3) Is certified as an active first responder, by the
25 Bureau of Emergency Medical Services or the Office of the
26 State Fire Commissioner, for four consecutive years preceding
27 the date of application.

28 (4) Executes a sworn affidavit, under penalty of
29 perjury, that the individual does not have a delinquent
30 payment owing to any Commonwealth agency.

1 § 79A44. Amount of awards.

2 (a) Loan forgiveness.--Agency-administered, federally
3 insured student loans for an approved program of education
4 provided to a qualified applicant may be forgiven by the agency
5 as follows:

6 (1) The agency may forgive a qualified applicant's loan
7 in an amount up to \$16,000.

8 (2) Payment of the award shall be made in accordance
9 with the procedures established by the agency.

10 (3) A qualified applicant may receive loan forgiveness
11 awards as follows:

12 (i) First year of active first responder status
13 following graduation in an amount up to \$4,000, but not
14 exceeding 25% of the original qualifying loans.

15 (ii) Second year of active first responder status
16 following graduation in an amount up to \$4,000, but not
17 exceeding 25% of the original qualifying loans.

18 (iii) Third year of active first responder status
19 following graduation in an amount up to \$8,000, but not
20 exceeding 50% of the original qualifying loans.

21 (b) Preference.--The agency may give preference in approving
22 loan forgiveness awards under the program to renewal
23 applications.

24 § 79A45. Funding.

25 The agency may approve loan forgiveness awards only to the
26 extent that funds are appropriated by the General Assembly and
27 are sufficient to cover administration of the program. In the
28 event that funding is insufficient to fully fund administration
29 and awards to all qualified applicants, the agency shall prorate
30 loan forgiveness awards.

1 § 79A46. Administration.

2 The agency shall promulgate regulations and adopt policies,
3 procedures and forms as are necessary and not inconsistent with
4 the provisions of this subchapter.

5 § 79A47. Point system.

6 (a) General rule.--A point system establishing the
7 requirements for annual certification of active first responders
8 shall be developed and implemented by the chief or president of:

9 (1) a volunteer fire company;

10 (2) a volunteer rescue company; and

11 (3) an emergency medical services agency.

12 (b) Factors.--The point system shall be used to determine
13 whether to certify an individual as an active first responder
14 and shall include the following factors:

15 (1) The number of emergency calls to which the
16 individual responded.

17 (2) The individual's level of training and participation
18 in formal training.

19 (3) Time spent by the individual on administration and
20 support activities, including maintenance of facilities and
21 equipment.

22 (4) Involvement by the individual in other projects that
23 directly benefit the organization's financial viability,
24 emergency response or operational readiness.

25 § 79A48. Certification.

26 (a) Application.--An applicant for certification as an
27 active first responder must submit a signed application to the
28 chief or president of the volunteer fire company, volunteer
29 rescue company or emergency medical services agency that the
30 applicant serves.

1 (b) Local sign-off.--The chief or president of the volunteer
2 fire company or volunteer rescue company and another officer of
3 the volunteer fire company or volunteer rescue company, or the
4 chief or president of the emergency medical services agency and
5 another officer of the emergency medical services agency, shall:

6 (1) Sign the application attesting to the individual's
7 status as an active first responder.

8 (2) Forward the application to the Office of the State
9 Fire Commissioner or the Department of Health for final
10 review and processing.

11 § 79A49. Guidelines.

12 The agency shall adopt guidelines, including forms, necessary
13 to administer this subchapter.

14 Section 3. This act shall take effect in 60 days.