
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 25 Session of
2015

INTRODUCED BY GREENLEAF, BREWSTER, TEPLITZ, YUDICHAK, STACK,
BLAKE, SCHWANK, BOSCOLA, HUGHES, VULAKOVICH, SMITH,
TARTAGLIONE AND RAFFERTY, JANUARY 14, 2015

REFERRED TO EDUCATION, JANUARY 14, 2015

AN ACT

1 Amending the act of December 16, 1998 (P.L.980, No.129),
2 entitled "An act providing for a waiver of tuition and other
3 fees for children of certain deceased police officers,
4 National Guard members, firefighters and correction employees
5 at community colleges and State-owned and State-related
6 institutions of higher education and for additional powers
7 and duties of the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance
8 Agency and the Department of General Services," extending
9 benefits to certain surviving spouses; and further providing
10 for title of act, for short title, for definitions, for
11 Postsecondary Educational Gratuities Program, for report to
12 General Assembly and for retroactivity.

13 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
14 hereby enacts as follows:

15 Section 1. The General Assembly finds and declares that it
16 is the intent of this act to recognize the ultimate sacrifice
17 made by police officers, firefighters, correction employees,
18 sheriffs and deputy sheriffs and National Guard members killed
19 in the performance of their duties by providing a postsecondary
20 educational gratuity for their children or surviving spouses at
21 community colleges and State-owned or State-related institutions
22 in this Commonwealth.

1 Section 2. The title and section 1 of the act of December
2 16, 1998 (P.L.980, No.129), known as the Police Officer,
3 Firefighter, Correction Employee and National Guard Member Child
4 Beneficiary Education Act, are amended to read:

5 AN ACT

6 Providing for a waiver of tuition and other fees for children or
7 surviving spouses of certain deceased police officers,
8 National Guard members, firefighters [and], emergency medical
9 services personnel, correction employees, State parole
10 agents, county probation and parole officers, sheriffs and
11 deputy sheriffs at community colleges and State-owned and
12 State-related institutions of higher education and for
13 additional powers and duties of the Pennsylvania Higher
14 Education Assistance Agency and the Department of General
15 Services.

16 Section 1. Short title.

17 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Police
18 Officer, Firefighter, Correction Employee [and], National Guard
19 Member [Child] and Special Public Servant Beneficiary Education
20 Act.

21 Section 3. Section 2 of the act is amended by adding
22 definitions to read:

23 Section 2. Definitions.

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

27 * * *

28 "County officer." A county probation or parole officer of
29 this Commonwealth.

30 * * *

1 "Emergency medical services personnel." The term includes,
2 but is not limited to, emergency medical services providers as
3 defined in 35 Pa.C.S. § 8103 (relating to definitions).

4 * * *

5 "State parole agent." A parole officer appointed by the
6 Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole.

7 "Surviving spouse." A resident of this Commonwealth who is
8 the spouse of a deceased police officer, firefighter, emergency
9 medical services personnel, correction employee, State parole
10 agent, county probation and parole officer, sheriff, deputy
11 sheriff or National Guard member, at the time of death, killed
12 in the performance of his or her duties.

13 * * *

14 Section 4. Section 3 of the act, amended November 30, 2004
15 (P.L.1663, No.210), is amended to read:

16 Section 3. Postsecondary Educational Gratuity Program.

17 (a) Establishment.--There is hereby established the
18 Postsecondary Educational Gratuity Program for children or
19 surviving spouses of police officers, firefighters, emergency
20 medical services personnel, correction employees, State parole
21 agents, county probation and parole officers, sheriffs, deputy
22 sheriffs and National Guard members and certain other
23 individuals who are on Federal or State active military duty who
24 are residents of this Commonwealth who are killed while acting
25 in the performance of their duties.

26 (b) Eligibility.--

27 (1) Police officers shall be deemed to have been killed
28 in the performance of their duties if death results from job-
29 related injuries sustained or inflicted while performing any
30 of the following:

1 (i) Answering an emergency call.

2 (ii) Conducting interrogations of crime suspects or
3 interrogations pursuant to a response to an emergency
4 call.

5 (iii) Conducting vehicle stops for traffic
6 violations.

7 (iv) Actively responding to requests for assistance
8 from the public.

9 (v) Maintaining order and security at the scene of
10 an emergency.

11 (2) Firefighters shall be deemed to have been killed in
12 the performance of their duties if death results from job-
13 related injuries sustained or inflicted while performing any
14 of the following:

15 (i) Being present at the scene of a fire or going to
16 and from a fire. In the case of volunteer firefighters,
17 going to and from a fire shall include traveling from and
18 directly returning to the firefighter's home, place of
19 business or other location where the firefighter was when
20 the fire call or alarm was received for a fire which the
21 firefighter's volunteer fire company attended.

22 (ii) Answering an emergency call.

23 (iii) Maintaining order and security at the scene of
24 an emergency.

25 (3) A member of the National Guard shall be deemed to
26 have been killed in the performance of his or her duties if
27 his or her death results from performance of a duty required
28 by his or her orders or commander while in an official duty
29 status authorized under Federal or State law.

30 (4) Correction employees shall be deemed to have been

1 killed in the performance of their duties if death results
2 from job-related injuries sustained or inflicted while
3 maintaining order and security or otherwise carrying out
4 their duties at a correctional facility.

5 (4.1) Sheriffs and deputy sheriffs shall be deemed to
6 have been killed in the performance of their duties if death
7 results from job-related injuries sustained or inflicted
8 while maintaining order and security or otherwise carrying
9 out their duties as a sheriff or deputy sheriff.

10 (4.2) An individual who is on Federal or State active
11 military duty who is a resident of this Commonwealth shall be
12 deemed to have been killed in the performance of duty if
13 death results from performance of a duty required by his or
14 her orders or commander while in an official duty status.

15 (4.3) Emergency medical services personnel shall be
16 deemed to have been killed in the performance of their duties
17 if death results from job-related injuries sustained or
18 inflicted while answering an emergency call.

19 (4.4) State parole agents and county probation and
20 parole officers shall be deemed to have been killed in the
21 performance of their duties if death results from job-related
22 injuries sustained or inflicted while carrying out their
23 duties.

24 (5) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section,
25 deaths which occur as the direct and proximate result of
26 preexisting physical conditions, diseases or illnesses shall
27 be excluded from eligibility under this section.

28 (6) Any child or surviving spouse of a police officer,
29 firefighter, emergency medical services personnel, correction
30 employee, State parole agent, county probation and parole

1 officer, sheriff, deputy sheriff or National Guard member
2 killed in the performance of his or her duties shall be
3 eligible for an educational gratuity provided:

4 (i) In the case of a child, that the child is 25
5 years of age or younger at the time of application for
6 participation in this program, meets all admission
7 requirements of the community college or State-owned or
8 State-related institution to which application is made
9 and is enrolled as a full-time student at a community
10 college or a State-owned or State-related institution.

11 (ii) In the case of a surviving spouse, that the
12 surviving spouse meets all admission requirements of the
13 community college or State-owned or State-related
14 institution to which application is made and is enrolled
15 as a full-time student at a community college or a State-
16 owned or State-related institution.

17 (7) A child who is 25 years of age or younger at the
18 time of the child's application for participation in this
19 program [and who] or a surviving spouse, either of whom meets
20 all other eligibility requirements, may receive an
21 educational gratuity for up to five years provided the child
22 or surviving spouse otherwise continues to be eligible for
23 participation.

24 (c) Scope of benefit.--

25 (1) The benefit available under this section shall be
26 provided only for full-time students who are pursuing
27 undergraduate studies leading to an associate degree or a
28 baccalaureate degree.

29 (2) A child or surviving spouse becomes eligible for
30 this benefit after he or she has applied for available

1 scholarships and Federal and State grants to cover tuition
2 and room and board costs. The child or surviving spouse must
3 provide a record of application for such financial aid to the
4 community college or State-owned or State-related institution
5 to which he or she is applying.

6 (3) A community college or a State-owned or State-
7 related institution shall waive all remaining tuition and
8 room and board charges (total tuition, room and board and
9 fees minus awarded scholarships and Federal and State grants)
10 for an eligible child or surviving spouse during the time the
11 child or surviving spouse is enrolled as a full-time student
12 provided the child or surviving spouse meets all requirements
13 for admission to the community college or State-owned or
14 State-related institution and during the child's or surviving
15 spouse's enrollment complies with all requirements of the
16 institution for continued attendance and award of an
17 associate degree or a baccalaureate degree.

18 (d) Administration.--

19 (1) Copies of all police officer [and], firefighter and
20 emergency medical services personnel death certifications
21 received by the Department of General Services under the act
22 of June 24, 1976 (P.L.424, No.101), referred to as the
23 Emergency and Law Enforcement Personnel Death Benefits Act,
24 shall be provided by the Department of General Services to
25 PHEAA within 20 days of their receipt.

26 (2) Written notification of the death of any correction
27 employee killed in the performance of his or her duties shall
28 be submitted to PHEAA by the Secretary of Corrections within
29 20 days of the death of the employee.

30 (2.1) Written notification of the death of any county

1 probation and parole officer, sheriff or deputy sheriff
2 killed in the performance of his or her duties shall be
3 submitted to PHEAA by the county commissioners of the county
4 in which the county probation and parole officer was
5 employed, sheriff was elected or deputy sheriff was employed
6 within 20 days of the death of the employee.

7 (2.2) Written notification of the death of any State
8 parole agent killed in the performance of his or her duties
9 shall be submitted to PHEAA by the chairman of the
10 Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole within 20 days of
11 the death of the employee.

12 (3) Written notification of the death of any member of
13 the National Guard or other individual who is on Federal or
14 State active military duty who is a resident of this
15 Commonwealth killed in the performance of his or her duties
16 shall be submitted to PHEAA by the Adjutant General of the
17 Department of Military and Veterans Affairs within 20 days of
18 the death of the National Guard member.

19 (4) Applications for an educational gratuity shall be
20 submitted to PHEAA by the child or the surviving parent or
21 guardian of the child or the surviving spouse, together with
22 a certified copy of the child's birth certificate or adoption
23 record or other documentation of birth or adoption acceptable
24 to PHEAA or a marriage certificate. The application shall
25 include a copy of the child's or surviving spouse's letter of
26 acceptance at a community college or a State-owned or State-
27 related institution. If no death certification has been
28 received from the Department of General Services, Secretary
29 of Corrections, county commissioners, chairman of the
30 Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole or Adjutant

1 General of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs,
2 PHEAA may elect to accept other documentation certifying that
3 the [child's parent] decedent was a police officer,
4 firefighter, emergency medical services personnel, correction
5 employee, State parole agent, county probation and parole
6 officer, sheriff, deputy sheriff or National Guard member
7 killed during the performance of his or her duties.

8 (5) Within 30 days of receipt of a completed
9 application, PHEAA shall send written notice to the child or
10 surviving spouse and the community college or State-owned or
11 State-related institution of the child's or surviving
12 spouse's eligibility or noneligibility for participation in
13 this program. If the child or surviving spouse is determined
14 not to be eligible for an educational gratuity, the notice
15 shall include the reason or reasons for such determination
16 and an indication that an appeal of PHEAA's determination may
17 be made pursuant to 2 Pa.C.S. (relating to administrative law
18 and procedure).

19 (6) Upon receipt of notification of the child's or
20 surviving spouse's eligibility from PHEAA, a community
21 college or a State-owned or State-related institution is
22 prohibited from charging the child or the child's parent or
23 guardian or surviving spouse any tuition fee or room and
24 board charge. If moneys have been received by the community
25 college or the State-owned or State-related institution for
26 these purposes, those moneys must be refunded in full within
27 30 days of receipt by the community college or the State-
28 owned or State-related institution of the notice of the
29 child's or surviving spouse's eligibility.

30 (7) Each community college or State-owned or State-

1 related institution at which an eligible child or surviving
2 spouse is enrolled shall notify PHEAA upon the child's or
3 surviving spouse's graduation or when the child or surviving
4 spouse is no longer enrolled at the community college or
5 State-owned or State-related institution.

6 Section 5. Sections 4 and 8 of the act are amended to read:

7 Section 4. Report to General Assembly.

8 Each year as part of its budget presentation to the General
9 Assembly, PHEAA shall provide a report on:

10 (1) The number of applications submitted during the
11 prior year, including numbers of applications approved and
12 disapproved.

13 (2) The number of children or surviving spouses
14 currently participating in this program at community colleges
15 or State-owned or State-related institutions.

16 (3) The number of program participants who have
17 completed requirements for an associate degree or a
18 baccalaureate degree during the prior year.

19 (4) The total number of program participants who have
20 received an associate degree or a baccalaureate degree since
21 the program's inception.

22 (5) The number of program participants who were approved
23 for an educational gratuity but who never obtained an
24 associate degree or a baccalaureate degree.

25 Section 8. Retroactivity.

26 This act shall be retroactive to:

27 (1) January 1, 1976, and the benefit provided shall be
28 available to qualified children of police officers,
29 firefighters, correction employees and National Guard members
30 of this Commonwealth killed in the performance of their

1 duties since that date. No community college, State-owned or
2 State-related institution shall reimburse qualified children
3 for tuition and fees or room and board charges paid between
4 January 1, 1976, and the effective date of this act.

5 (2) January 1, 2015, and the benefit provided shall be
6 available to qualified surviving spouses of police officers,
7 firefighters, emergency medical services personnel,
8 correction employees, State parole agents, county probation
9 and parole officers, sheriffs and deputy sheriffs and
10 National Guard members of this Commonwealth killed in the
11 performance of their duties since that date. No community
12 college, State-owned or State-related institution shall
13 reimburse qualified surviving spouses for tuition and fees or
14 room and board charges paid between January 1, 2015, and the
15 effective date of this paragraph.

16 Section 6. This act shall take effect immediately.