

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 891 Session of
2011

INTRODUCED BY PAYTON, B. BOYLE, K. BOYLE AND STURLA,
MARCH 2, 2011

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, MARCH 2, 2011

AN ACT

1 Establishing a Statewide academic scholarship program to be
2 known as the Reliable Educational Assistance for College
3 Hopefuls Scholarship for STEM Majors; and providing for the
4 powers and duties of the Pennsylvania Higher Education
5 Assistance Agency.

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 Reliable
10 Educational Assistance for College Hopefuls Scholarship for
11 Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Majors Act.

12 Section 2. Purpose.

13 The purpose of this act is to reward educational excellence
14 and provide an incentive to Pennsylvania students to pursue
15 higher education in the fields of science, technology,
16 engineering and math within this Commonwealth.

17 Section 3. Definitions.

18 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
19 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the

1 context clearly indicates otherwise:

2 "Agency." The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance
3 Agency.

4 "Approved course of study." A program or curriculum offered
5 at a college or university within this Commonwealth that
6 provides instruction in science, technology, engineering, math
7 or related fields and has been approved by the Department of
8 Education.

9 "Department." The Department of Education of the
10 Commonwealth.

11 "Fund." The REACH Scholarship Fund for STEM Majors
12 established in section 6.

13 "Grade point average." The numbered grade average calculated
14 using a 4.0 scale.

15 "Private institution of higher education." An institution of
16 higher education located in this Commonwealth that provides an
17 organized four-year program of undergraduate instruction toward
18 a baccalaureate degree and that is not a State-owned institution
19 or State-related institution.

20 "REACH Scholarship for STEM Majors." The Reliable
21 Educational Assistance for College Hopefuls Scholarship for STEM
22 Majors established under section 4.

23 "State-owned institution." An institution that is part of
24 the State System of Higher Education pursuant to Article XX-A of
25 the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public
26 School Code of 1949.

27 "State-related institution." Any of the following: The
28 Pennsylvania State University, the University of Pittsburgh,
29 Temple University and Lincoln University and their branch
30 campuses.

1 "STEM." Science, technology, engineering, math and related
2 fields of study covered under this act.

3 "Student." A school-age resident of this Commonwealth who
4 attends or is about to attend a State-owned institution, State-
5 related institution or private institution of higher education
6 located in this Commonwealth and who is enrolled, or plans to
7 enroll, in an approved course of study.

8 Section 4. REACH Scholarship for STEM Majors.

9 (a) Establishment.--The REACH Scholarship for STEM Majors is
10 established within the agency.

11 (b) Issuance of scholarships.--

12 (1) The agency shall provide scholarships, which may be
13 referred to as REACH Scholarships for STEM Majors, to all
14 students who meet the requirements of subsection (d) or (f).
15 The scholarships may be issued to a student only upon
16 confirmation from the State-owned institution, State-related
17 institution or private institution of higher education to
18 which the student has enrolled full time.

19 (2) The scholarships shall be available for four years
20 or upon completion of a baccalaureate degree, whichever
21 occurs earlier.

22 (3) The scholarships shall only be used for tuition and
23 mandatory fees.

24 (4) The scholarships shall be awarded solely on the
25 basis of merit and without regard to need.

26 (5) The scholarships shall only be awarded to students
27 who are high school seniors during or after the school year
28 in which this section takes effect.

29 (6) The department shall establish a list of approved
30 courses of study for the program.

1 (c) Calculation of award.--

2 (1) Each eligible student who will attend or attends a
3 State-owned institution and enrolls in an approved course of
4 study shall receive a full-tuition scholarship.

5 (2) Each eligible student who will attend or attends a
6 State-related institution or private institution of higher
7 education and enrolls in an approved course of study shall
8 receive the lesser of a full-tuition scholarship or a
9 scholarship equal to the average tuition at the State-owned
10 institutions as calculated annually by the agency.

11 (d) Eligibility.--To receive a scholarship under this
12 section, a student must meet all of the following requirements:

13 (1) Pennsylvania residency for at least three years
14 prior to application for the REACH Scholarship for STEM
15 Majors.

16 (2) Pennsylvania residency during the term of the
17 scholarship.

18 (3) Cumulative high school grade point average of 3.0 or
19 higher for the sophomore, junior and senior years of high
20 school. If the student does not graduate from high school or
21 completes a home study program meeting the requirements of
22 section 1327.1 of the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14),
23 known as the Public School Code of 1949, the agency shall
24 determine the eligibility of the student.

25 (4) Graduation in the top ten percentile of the
26 graduating class. If the student does not graduate from high
27 school or completes a home study program meeting the
28 requirements of section 1327.1 of the act of March 10, 1949
29 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, the
30 agency shall determine the eligibility of the student.

1 (5) Cumulative high school attendance of at least 90%
2 for the sophomore, junior and senior years of high school
3 unless the agency determines there are extenuating
4 circumstances, including, but not limited to, approved
5 medical or personal leave of absence. If the student does not
6 graduate from high school but completes a home study program
7 meeting the requirements of section 1327.1 of the Public
8 School Code of 1949, the agency shall determine the
9 eligibility of the student.

10 (6) Satisfactory disciplinary record or conduct record
11 for the sophomore, junior and senior years of high school. If
12 the student does not meet this requirement but meets or
13 exceeds all other requirements under this subsection, the
14 agency shall determine eligibility of the student.

15 (7) Satisfactory academic progress toward completion of
16 an approved course of study at a State-owned institution,
17 State-related institution or private institution of higher
18 education as provided under subsection (f).

19 (8) Entrance into a written agreement with the agency to
20 maintain Pennsylvania residency for four years after
21 completion of an undergraduate degree. The student shall
22 reimburse the Commonwealth all amounts received under this
23 act and interest thereon, at a rate equal to the average
24 Stafford loan through the term of the scholarship, if the
25 student fails to comply with the terms of the written
26 agreement.

27 (9) Apply for the Free Application for Federal Student
28 Aid each year during the term of the scholarship.

29 (10) Complete at least 100 hours of community service
30 each academic year of high school. The community service must

1 be documented by a supervisor and approved by the agency.

2 (e) Contents of application.--The application of a student
3 who seeks a scholarship as prescribed by the agency must
4 include:

5 (1) All information and documentation required by the
6 agency.

7 (2) If the student is under 18 years of age, the
8 signature of a parent or guardian.

9 (3) A verified statement of grade point average,
10 attendance and disciplinary record or conduct record from the
11 appropriate educational institution.

12 (f) Maintenance of scholarship.--

13 (1) Except as provided under paragraph (2), a student
14 must maintain a grade point average of 3.0 or higher during
15 each semester at a State-owned institution, State-related
16 institution or private institution of higher education
17 through the term of the scholarship, unless the agency
18 determines that there are extenuating circumstances,
19 including, but not limited to, approved medical or personal
20 leave of absence.

21 (2) In the event that a student receives a grade point
22 average below 3.0 during the first or second semester of the
23 freshmen or first year at a State-owned institution, State-
24 related institution or private institution of higher
25 education, the agency shall place the student on scholarship
26 probation.

27 (3) A student must complete 40 hours of community
28 service during each 12-month period during the term of the
29 scholarship, which community service must be verified by the
30 agency.

(g) Scholarship termination and transfer.--

(1) If a student who has received a scholarship terminates enrollment in the educational institution to which the student has enrolled full time during the academic year or enrolls in a program of study that is not an approved course of study, the educational institution shall notify the agency in writing and shall return all unused portions of the scholarship.

(2) Returned amounts shall be deposited in the REACH Scholarship Fund for STEM Majors.

(3) A student may transfer a scholarship from one State-owned institution, State-related institution or private institution of higher education to another, provided that the student continues enrollment in an approved course of study.

(h) Limitation.--A scholarship shall be paid only from the REACH Scholarship Fund for STEM Majors.

Section 5. Administration.

(a) Verification.--The agency shall monitor and verify a student's compliance with all the requirements under this act.

(b) Enforcement.--The agency shall enforce repayment of all scholarships for a student who does not comply with the provisions of this act, to include use of all lawful collection procedures and the use of private collection agencies.

(c) Exclusion from taxation.--No scholarship received by a student shall not be considered taxable income for purposes of Article III of the act of March 4, 1971 (P.L.6, No.2), known as the Tax Reform Code of 1971.

(d) Financial assistance.--No scholarship received by a student shall be considered financial assistance or appropriations to the approved education institution.

1 (e) Regulations.--The agency shall adopt regulations and
2 procedures necessary to carry out the purposes of this act.

3 Section 6. REACH Scholarship Fund for STEM Majors.

4 (a) Establishment.--The REACH Scholarship Fund for STEM
5 Majors is established as a separate fund in the State Treasury.

6 (b) Administration.--The fund shall be administered by the
7 agency.

8 (c) Use of fund.--The purpose of the fund shall be to
9 provide full tuition scholarships or equivalent scholarships to
10 students who have been determined eligible in accordance with
11 this act.

12 (d) Funding source.--

13 (1) Donations and contributions from all public and
14 private sources, including the Federal Government, and any
15 appropriations or transfers authorized by the General
16 Assembly may be deposited in the fund.

17 (2) All interest earned by the fund and all refunds and
18 repayments shall be credited to the fund.

19 (e) Limit on scholarships.--The agency shall not award more
20 than \$25,000,000 in scholarships under this act.

21 Section 7. Report to General Assembly.

22 On or before April 1 following the effective date of this
23 section, and in each succeeding year in which REACH Scholarships
24 for STEM Majors are awarded, the agency shall provide a report
25 to the General Assembly regarding the implementation and
26 administration of this act.

27 Section 8. Effective date.

28 This act shall take effect July 1, 2011, or immediately,
29 whichever is later.