

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 1722 Session of
2007

INTRODUCED BY PAYTON, D. O'BRIEN, THOMAS, SHAPIRO, BLACKWELL,
COHEN, CRUZ, DeWEESE, DONATUCCI, EACHUS, FREEMAN, GEIST,
GERBER, GERGELY, GOODMAN, GRUCELA, HARPER, HERSHEY,
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OLIVER, PARKER, SABATINA, SHIMKUS, STURLA, SURRA, J. TAYLOR,
R. TAYLOR, WAGNER, WANSACZ, WATERS, WHEATLEY, WILLIAMS AND
YOUNGBLOOD, JULY 9, 2007

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, JULY 9, 2007

AN ACT

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

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

7 Section 1. Short title.

8 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Reliable
9 Educational Assistance for College Hopefuls Scholarship Act.

10 Section 2. Purpose.

11 The purpose of this act is to reward educational excellence
12 and provide an incentive to Pennsylvania students to pursue
13 higher education within this Commonwealth.

14 Section 3. Definitions.

15 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
16 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 "Fund." The REACH Scholarship Fund established in section 6.

5 "Grade point average." The numbered grade average calculated
6 using a 4.0 scale.

7 "Private institution of higher education." An institution of
8 higher education located in this Commonwealth that provides an
9 organized four-year program of undergraduate instruction toward
10 a baccalaureate degree and that is not a State-owned institution
11 or State-related institution.

12 "REACH." The Reliable Educational Assistance for College
13 Hopefuls Scholarship established under section 4.

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

18 "State-related institution." Any of the following: The
19 Pennsylvania State University, The University of Pittsburgh,
20 Temple University and Lincoln University and their branch
21 campuses.

22 "Student." A school-age resident of this Commonwealth who
23 attends or is about to attend a State-owned institution, State-
24 related institution or private institution of higher education
25 located in this Commonwealth.

26 Section 4. REACH Scholarship.

27 (a) Establishment.--The REACH Scholarship is established
28 within the agency.

29 (b) Issuance of scholarships.--

30 (1) The agency shall provide scholarships, which may be

1 referred to as REACH Scholarships, to all students who meet
2 the requirements of subsection (d) or (f). The scholarships
3 may be issued to a student only upon confirmation from the
4 State-owned institution, State-related institution or private
5 institution of higher education to which the student has
6 enrolled full time.

7 (2) The scholarships shall be available for four years
8 or upon completion of a baccalaureate degree, whichever
9 occurs earlier.

10 (3) The scholarships shall only be used for tuition and
11 mandatory fees.

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

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

17 (c) Calculation of award.--

18 (1) Each eligible student who will attend or attends a
19 State-owned institution shall receive a full-tuition
20 scholarship.

21 (2) Each eligible student who will attend or attends a
22 State-related institution or private institution of higher
23 education shall receive the lesser of a full-tuition
24 scholarship or a scholarship equal to the average tuition at
25 the State-owned institutions as calculated annually by the
26 agency.

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

29 (1) Pennsylvania residency for at least three years
30 prior to application for the REACH Scholarship.

1 (2) Pennsylvania residency during the term of the
2 scholarship.

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

10 (4) Cumulative high school attendance of at least 90%
11 for the sophomore, junior and senior years of high school
12 unless the agency determines there are extenuating
13 circumstances, including, but not limited to, approved
14 medical or personal leave of absence. If the student does not
15 graduate from high school but completes a home study program
16 meeting the requirements of section 1327.1 of the Public
17 School Code of 1949, the agency shall determine the
18 eligibility of the student.

19 (5) Satisfactory disciplinary record or conduct record
20 for the sophomore, junior and senior years of high school. If
21 the student does not meet this requirement but meets or
22 exceeds all other requirements under this subsection, the
23 agency shall determine eligibility of the student.

24 (6) Satisfactory academic progress toward completion of
25 a course of study at a State-owned institution, State-related
26 institution or private institution of higher education as
27 provided under subsection (f).

28 (7) Entrance into a written agreement with the agency to
29 maintain Pennsylvania residency for four years after
30 completion of an undergraduate degree. The student shall

1 reimburse the Commonwealth all amounts received under this
2 act and interest thereon, at a rate equal to the average
3 Stafford loan through the term of the scholarship, if the
4 student fails to comply with the terms of the written
5 agreement.

6 (8) Apply for the Free Application for Federal Student
7 Aid each year during the term of the scholarship.

8 (e) Contents of application.--The application of a student
9 who seeks a scholarship as prescribed by the agency must
10 include:

11 (1) All information and documentation required by the
12 agency.

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

15 (3) A verified statement of grade point average,
16 attendance and disciplinary record or conduct record from the
17 appropriate educational institution.

18 (f) Maintenance of scholarship.--

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

27 (2) In the event that a student receives a grade point
28 average below 3.0 during the first or second semester of the
29 freshmen or first year at a State-owned institution, State-
30 related institution or private institution of higher

1 education, the agency shall place the student on scholarship
2 probation.

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

7 (g) Scholarship termination and transfer.--

8 (1) If a student who has received a scholarship
9 terminates enrollment in the educational institution to which
10 the student has enrolled full time during the academic year,
11 the educational institution shall notify the agency in
12 writing and shall return all unused portions of the
13 scholarship.

14 (2) Returned amounts shall be deposited in the REACH
15 Scholarship Fund.

16 (3) A student may transfer a scholarship from one State-
17 owned institution, State-related institution or private
18 institution of higher education to another.

19 (h) Limitation.--A scholarship shall be paid only from the
20 REACH Scholarship Fund.

21 Section 5. Administration.

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

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

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

1 the Tax Reform Code of 1971.

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

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

7 Section 6. REACH Scholarship Fund.

8 (a) Establishment.--The REACH Scholarship Fund is
9 established as a separate fund in the State Treasury.

10 (b) Administration.--The fund shall be administered by the
11 agency.

12 (c) Use of fund.--The purpose of the fund shall be to
13 provide full tuition scholarships or equivalent scholarships to
14 students who have been determined eligible in accordance with
15 this act.

16 (d) Funding source.--

17 (1) Donations and contributions from all public and
18 private sources, including the Federal Government, and any
19 appropriations or transfers authorized by the General
20 Assembly may be deposited in the fund.

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

23 Section 7. Report to General Assembly.

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

29 Section 8. Effective date.

30 This act shall take effect July 1, 2008, or immediately,

1 whichever is later.