
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 485 Session of
2015

INTRODUCED BY DAWKINS, SCHWEYER, BISHOP, KORTZ, SCHREIBER,
READSHAW, D. COSTA, STURLA, V. BROWN, PASHINSKI, THOMAS,
ROZZI, FLYNN, BROWNLEE, COHEN, MURT, McNEILL, WHEATLEY AND
C. PARKER, FEBRUARY 17, 2015

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, FEBRUARY 17, 2015

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
17 context clearly indicates otherwise:

18 "Agency." The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance

1 Agency.

2 "Fund." The REACH Scholarship Fund established under section
3 6.

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

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

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

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

17 "State-related institution." The Pennsylvania State
18 University, the University of Pittsburgh, Temple University and
19 Lincoln University and their branch campuses.

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

24 Section 4. REACH Scholarship.

25 (a) Establishment.--The REACH Scholarship is established
26 within the agency.

27 (b) Issuance of scholarships.--

28 (1) The agency shall provide scholarships, which may be
29 referred to as REACH Scholarships, to all students who meet
30 the requirements of subsection (d) or (f). The scholarships

1 may be issued to a student only upon confirmation from the
2 State-owned institution, State-related institution or private
3 institution of higher education to which the student has
4 enrolled full time.

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

8 (3) The scholarships shall only be used for tuition and
9 mandatory fees.

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

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

15 (c) Calculation of award.--

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

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

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

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

29 (2) Pennsylvania residency during the term of the
30 scholarship.

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

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

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

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

26 (7) Entrance into a written agreement with the agency to
27 maintain Pennsylvania residency for four years after
28 completion of a baccalaureate degree. The student shall
29 reimburse the Commonwealth all amounts received under this
30 act and interest thereon, at a rate equal to the average

1 Stafford loan through the term of the scholarship, if the
2 student fails to comply with the terms of the written
3 agreement.

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

6 (9) Complete at least 100 hours of community service
7 each academic year. The community service must be documented
8 by a supervisor and approved by the agency.

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

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

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

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

19 (f) Maintenance of scholarship.--

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

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

1 of higher education, the agency shall place the student on
2 scholarship probation. If a student on scholarship probation
3 receives a grade point average below 3.0 in any following
4 semester, the scholarship shall be terminated.

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

9 (g) Scholarship termination and transfer.--

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

16 (2) Returned amounts shall be deposited in the REACH
17 Scholarship Fund.

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

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

23 Section 5. Administration.

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

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

30 (c) Exclusion from taxation.--No scholarship received by a

1 student shall be considered taxable income for purposes of
2 Article III of the act of March 4, 1971 (P.L.6, No.2), known as
3 the Tax Reform Code of 1971.

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

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

9 Section 6. REACH Scholarship Fund.

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

12 (b) Administration.--The fund shall be administered by the
13 agency.

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

18 (d) Funding source.--

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

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

25 Section 7. Report to General Assembly.

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

1 Section 8. Effective date.

2 This act shall take effect July 1, 2015, or immediately,

3 whichever is later.