
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 1303 Session of
2015

INTRODUCED BY DINNIMAN, FONTANA, VULAKOVICH, COSTA, YUDICHAK,
TEPLITZ, RAFFERTY, GREENLEAF AND BREWSTER, JUNE 14, 2016

REFERRED TO VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS,
JUNE 14, 2016

AN ACT

1 Establishing the Student Volunteer Firefighter Housing Grant
2 Program; providing for the powers and duties of the State
3 Fire Commissioner; and making an appropriation.

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

6 Section 1. Short title.

7 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Student
8 Volunteer Firefighter Housing Grant Act.

9 Section 2. Definitions.

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

13 "Commissioner." The State Fire Commissioner of the
14 Commonwealth.

15 "Eligible student." A student who joins a sponsoring
16 volunteer fire company or an emergency medical service company
17 and enters into a contractual agreement with the sponsoring
18 company under a local program to provide at least the minimum

1 amount of service per week in the activities of a sponsoring
2 company.

3 "Emergency medical service company." A nonprofit chartered
4 corporation, association or organization that is located in this
5 Commonwealth, is licensed by the Department of Health, is not
6 associated or affiliated with a hospital and is regularly
7 engaged in the provision of emergency medical services,
8 including basic life support, advanced life support services and
9 advanced life support squads under 35 Pa.C.S. Ch. 81 (relating
10 to emergency medical services system). The term does not include
11 a corporation, association or organization that is primarily
12 engaged in the operation of invalid coaches intended for the
13 routine transport of persons who are convalescent or otherwise
14 nonambulatory and do not ordinarily require emergency medical
15 treatment while in transit.

16 "Full-time basis." As defined in 22 Pa. Code § 121.1
17 (relating to definitions), except for purposes of the Federal
18 Stafford Loan and Federal PLUS Loan Programs.

19 "Grant program." The Student Volunteer Firefighter Housing
20 Grant Program established by this act.

21 "Institution of higher education." As defined in section
22 2301-A of the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as
23 the Public School Code of 1949.

24 "Invalid coach." A vehicle which is primarily maintained,
25 operated and intended to be used for routine transport of
26 persons who are convalescent or otherwise nonambulatory and do
27 not ordinarily require emergency medical treatment while in
28 transit. The vehicle shall not be considered an ambulance or
29 emergency medical services vehicle.

30 "Local program." A program established by a volunteer fire

1 company or an emergency medical services company to:

2 (1) Construct or renovate a facility to house eligible
3 students.

4 (2) Enroll and enter into contractual agreements with
5 students.

6 (3) House eligible students.

7 (4) Monitor and enforce eligible students' compliance
8 with the provisions of the contractual agreement.

9 "Sponsoring company." A volunteer fire company or an
10 emergency medical services company that has established a local
11 program.

12 "Student." A student who is a resident of this Commonwealth
13 and enrolled at an institution of higher education on a full-
14 time basis.

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

21 Section 3. Grant program.

22 (a) Establishment.--The Student Volunteer Firefighter
23 Housing Grant Program is established and shall be administered
24 by the commissioner.

25 (b) Purpose of grants.--Grants may be awarded to sponsoring
26 companies for the purpose of constructing or renovating
27 facilities owned by the sponsoring fire company as housing units
28 for students in order to increase student membership in
29 sponsoring companies to maintain and improve the current level
30 of firefighting and rescue services and emergency medical

1 services.

2 (c) Applications.--A sponsoring company must submit an
3 application to the agency for a grant in a manner and a form to
4 be established by the commissioner. The application shall
5 include a certificate of occupancy issued for the housing units
6 and a written copy of the local program.

7 (d) Contents of local program.--A local program shall
8 contain all of the following:

9 (1) A sufficiently detailed description of the
10 construction and renovation of the facility, including
11 compliance with relevant Federal, State and local building
12 codes.

13 (2) A requirement that an eligible student has completed
14 and received certification from either:

15 (i) the Pennsylvania Fire Academy, or one of its
16 delegated authorities, for Firefighter I, II or III, Fire
17 Officer I or II or Fire Instructor I or II; or

18 (ii) the Department of Health, for certification as
19 an emergency medical technician.

20 (3) A contractual agreement in which a student agrees
21 to:

22 (i) become a member of the sponsoring company prior
23 to occupation of the provided housing and remain a member
24 of the sponsoring company during the entire period of
25 time the student occupies the provided housing;

26 (ii) participate in the function of the sponsoring
27 company during each semester, any agreed-upon service
28 during vacation periods and other periods between
29 semesters;

30 (iii) comply with the requirement for providing

1 certain types of service and a minimum number of hours of
2 service, that on average equals 30 hours per week, and
3 any conditions for any time extension or modification of
4 the type of service, as determined by the agreement;

5 (iv) pay an amount equal to the total value of the
6 services, as determined by the agreement, in the event
7 that the eligible student does not provide the types and
8 minimum number of hours of service, contained in the
9 agreement; and

10 (v) at the end of the school year and any additional
11 time periods as set forth in the agreement, cooperate
12 with the sponsoring company in a review of the nature and
13 hours of service rendered by the eligible student by the
14 sponsoring company to determine compliance with the
15 minimum service requirement.

16 (4) A description of the remedies and procedures
17 contained in the agreement whereby the sponsoring company may
18 seek to recover the value of the hours of service not
19 provided by an eligible student, including any time
20 extensions for complying with the service requirements.

21 (5) A description of the manner in which the value of an
22 hour of service is determined.

23 (6) A copy of a sample contractual agreement.

24 (7) Any other information determined to be necessary by
25 the commissioner.

26 Section 4. Award of grants.

27 (a) General rule.--The commissioner may approve a grant
28 award to a sponsoring company for the purposes of funding
29 construction of a new facility and renovation of an existing
30 facility owned by the sponsoring company for the housing of

1 eligible students.

2 (b) Second grants.--A sponsoring company shall be eligible
3 to apply for and receive one grant under the grant program. An
4 application from a sponsoring company for a second grant to
5 expand its local program may be submitted in any year following
6 the year when the initial grant was received and shall require
7 an additional showing to the satisfaction of the commissioner
8 that the initial grant received by the sponsoring company
9 achieved the goals for improved firefighting, rescue services or
10 emergency medical services, as stated in the local program.

11 (c) Amounts.--

12 (1) The maximum amount of a grant shall not exceed
13 \$50,000. The total amount of grants awarded per fiscal year
14 shall not exceed \$2,500,000.

15 (2) If the applications for a grant exceed the total
16 amount of funding for the program, the amount of the grant
17 shall not be reduced pro rata, and the total number of grants
18 awarded shall be accordingly reduced.

19 (d) Local program required.--The commissioner may award a
20 grant only to a sponsoring company that has established and
21 submitted to the commissioner a local program with its
22 application.

23 (e) Use of grant.--A grant awarded under this act shall be
24 used for the purposes authorized by this program.

25 Section 5. Reports.

26 (a) Duty of sponsoring companies.--

27 (1) A sponsoring company that receives a grant shall
28 submit an annual report for two consecutive years following
29 the receipt of the grant. The initial annual report shall be
30 submitted one year following the receipt of the grant and on

1 that date for the two subsequent years.

2 (2) The annual report shall include such information as
3 the commissioner deems necessary to determine the
4 effectiveness of the grant program and shall include the
5 number of eligible students who participated, the number of
6 students who did not comply with the minimum service hour
7 requirements and the measures undertaken by the sponsoring
8 company.

9 (b) Duty of commissioner.--The commissioner shall prepare
10 and submit a report to the General Assembly by September 30,
11 2022, on the level of participation by sponsor companies, the
12 level of participation by eligible students, the effectiveness
13 of the program to maintain and increase the number of volunteer
14 fire company members and volunteer emergency medical service
15 company members and the overall operation of the program. The
16 report shall include a statement as to whether the commissioner
17 recommends reenactment of the grant program.

18 Section 6. Publication and notice.

19 The commissioner shall file notice of the grant program's
20 availability through the Legislative Reference Bureau for
21 publication in the Pennsylvania Bulletin:

22 (1) within 90 days of the effective date of this section
23 for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2016; and

24 (2) by August 8 for fiscal years beginning after June
25 30, 2017.

26 Section 7. Appropriation.

27 (a) General rule.--The sum of \$12,500,000 is hereby
28 appropriated from the General Fund to the Office of the State
29 Fire Commissioner to carry out the purposes of this act.

30 (b) Continuing nature.--This appropriation shall be a

1 continuing appropriation and shall not lapse until the close of
2 the fiscal year on June 30, 2021, when the remaining unspent and
3 unencumbered funds shall lapse back to the General Fund.

4 (c) Restriction on use.--No money from the appropriation for
5 grants shall be used for expenses or costs incurred by the
6 commissioner for the administration of the grant program under
7 this act.

8 Section 8. Regulations.

9 The commissioner shall:

10 (1) Promulgate regulations necessary to carry out the
11 purposes of this act.

12 (2) Upon completion of at least one public hearing,
13 publish interim regulations to carry out the purposes of this
14 act within 90 days of the effective date of this section. The
15 interim regulations shall not be subject to the act of
16 October 15, 1980 (P.L.950, No.164), known as the Commonwealth
17 Attorneys Act, or the act of June 25, 1982 (P.L.633, No.181),
18 known as the Regulatory Review Act. The interim regulations
19 shall expire 18 months following the effective date of this
20 section or when final regulations are promulgated, whichever
21 occurs first. Final regulations shall be promulgated no later
22 than 18 months following the effective date of this section.

23 Section 9. Expiration of authority.

24 The authority of the commissioner to award grants under this
25 act shall expire June 30, 2021.

26 Section 10. Effective date.

27 This act shall take effect July 1, 2017, or immediately,
28 whichever is later.