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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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SENATE BILL

No. 1376 Session of  
2015

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INTRODUCED BY TEPLITZ, COSTA, GREENLEAF, RAFFERTY AND  
HUTCHINSON, OCTOBER 13, 2016

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REFERRED TO EDUCATION, OCTOBER 13, 2016

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AN ACT

1 Establishing the Pennsylvania Plant A Seed Education Loan  
2 Forgiveness Program; and prescribing powers and duties of the  
3 Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency.

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 Pennsylvania  
8 Plant A Seed Education Loan Forgiveness 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 "Agency." The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance  
14 Agency.

15 "Approved institution of higher learning." An educational  
16 institution offering a postsecondary program of education,  
17 including vocational schools located in this Commonwealth and  
18 approved by the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency.

1 "Award." A student loan forgiveness award under this act.

2 "Program." The Pennsylvania Plant A Seed Education Loan  
3 Forgiveness Program established in section 3.

4 Section 3. Pennsylvania Plant A Seed Education Loan Forgiveness  
5 Program.

6 (a) Establishment.--The Pennsylvania Plant A Seed Education  
7 Loan Forgiveness Program is established and shall be  
8 administered by the agency.

9 (b) Purpose.--The agency may grant student and training loan  
10 forgiveness awards through the program for the purpose of  
11 alleviating the burden of student loan debt for young farmers,  
12 including students and aspiring young farmers who demonstrate  
13 economic need.

14 (c) Eligibility criteria.--Awards shall be made on a  
15 competitive basis to applicants who meet the eligibility  
16 criteria with special consideration of applicants who are  
17 economically disadvantaged. The agency shall promulgate rules  
18 and regulations regarding the determination of award recipients.

19 Section 4. Loan forgiveness eligibility.

20 To be eligible for an award, an applicant must:

21 (1) Have graduated with an agricultural-related degree  
22 from an approved institution of higher learning with an  
23 outstanding student loan debt from obtaining the degree.

24 (2) Have completed and passed an agricultural training  
25 program in this Commonwealth with an outstanding training  
26 loan debt from completing the program.

27 (3) Operate a farm in this Commonwealth on a full-time  
28 basis.

29 (4) Agree to operate the farm for no less than five  
30 years.

1           (5) Apply for the program within five years of college  
2 graduation or completion of training.

3           (6) Demonstrate that the applicant is a farmer and at  
4 least two-thirds of the applicant's gross income from all  
5 sources for that fiscal year is from farming.

6 Section 5. Awards.

7           At least 10 awards may be granted to qualified applicants in  
8 the amount of up to \$10,000 per year, per applicant, not to  
9 exceed a duration of five years and not to exceed the total  
10 amount of such applicant's student training or loan debt. The  
11 agency may grant the awards within the amount appropriated for  
12 awards and based on the availability of funds. No one applicant  
13 may receive more than a total of \$50,000 upon the end of a five-  
14 year period.

15 Section 6. Priority.

16           (a) First priority.--First priority shall be given to  
17 veterans who apply to receive an award under the program.

18           (b) Second priority.--Second priority shall be given to  
19 applicants who complete the second, third, fourth or fifth year  
20 of full-time farm operation and reapply to receive an award  
21 under the program.

22           (c) Third priority.--Third priority shall be given to  
23 applicants who demonstrate economic need but did not receive an  
24 award during the first year of the program's operation.

25 Section 7. Appropriation.

26           The General Assembly shall appropriate funds for awards under  
27 this act. A portion of the funds appropriated may be used to pay  
28 the costs associated with this act.

29 Section 8. Effective date.

30           This act shall take effect in 60 days.