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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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SENATE BILL

No. 474 Session of  
2017

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INTRODUCED BY FARNESE, BREWSTER, FONTANA, TARTAGLIONE, COSTA AND  
YUDICHAK, MARCH 1, 2017

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REFERRED TO EDUCATION, MARCH 1, 2017

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AN ACT

1 Providing for a grant program for eligible school entities to  
2 improve attendance at colleges; imposing duties on the  
3 Department of Education; 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 Pennsylvania  
8 Pathways to College 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 "College-going rate." The percentage of high school  
14 graduates who enroll at an institution of higher education in  
15 the school year immediately following graduation from high  
16 school.

17 "Department." The Department of Education of the  
18 Commonwealth.

1 "Eligible school entity." A school entity in which a  
2 majority of the high schools served by the school entity are  
3 high-need high schools.

4 "Grant recipient." An eligible school entity that receives a  
5 grant under this act.

6 "High-need high school." A high school in which not less  
7 than 50% of the students enrolled in the school are:

8 (1) eligible to receive free or reduced price meals  
9 under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (60  
10 Stat. 230, 42 U.S.C. § 1751 et seq.);

11 (2) eligible to be counted under section 1124(c) of the  
12 Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law  
13 89-10, 20 U.S.C. § 6333(c)); or

14 (3) members of families eligible for public assistance  
15 under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

16 "High school." A public high school in a school district  
17 located in this Commonwealth and an area vocational-technical  
18 school located in this Commonwealth.

19 "High school graduation rate." The percentage of students  
20 who graduate from high school with a regular diploma in the  
21 standard number of years, as defined under 34 C.F.R. § 200.19(b)  
22 (1) (relating to other academic indicators).

23 "Institution of higher education." As defined in section  
24 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-329,  
25 20 U.S.C. § 1001(a)).

26 "School entity." A school district or area vocational-  
27 technical school.

28 Section 3. Grant program.

29 (a) Competitive grants.--The department may award grants on  
30 a competitive basis to eligible school entities to carry out the

1 activities described in this act.

2 (b) Duration.--A grant awarded under this act shall be four  
3 years in duration.

4 (c) Distribution.--In awarding grants under this act, the  
5 department shall ensure that the grants are distributed among  
6 the different geographic regions of this Commonwealth and among  
7 eligible school entities serving urban and rural areas.

8 Section 4. Grant application.

9 (a) Eligible school entity.--An eligible school entity  
10 desiring a grant under this act shall submit an application to  
11 the department at the time, in the manner and accompanied by the  
12 information as the department may reasonably require.

13 (b) Contents.--An application submitted under subsection (a)  
14 shall include a description of the program to be carried out  
15 with grant funds and:

16 (1) a description of the high school population to be  
17 targeted by the program, the particular college-access needs  
18 of the population and the resources available for meeting the  
19 needs;

20 (2) an outline of the objectives of the program,  
21 including goals for increasing the number of college  
22 applications submitted by each student and the number of  
23 students submitting applications, increasing Free Application  
24 for Federal Student Aid completion rates and increasing  
25 school-wide college-going rates across the school entity;

26 (3) a description of the school entity's plan to work  
27 cooperatively, where applicable, with programs funded under  
28 Chapters 1 and 2 of Subpart 2 of Part A of Title IV of the  
29 Higher Education Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-329, 20 U.S.C. §§  
30 1070a-11 et seq. and 1070a-21 et seq.), including the extent

1 to which the school entity commits to sharing facilities,  
2 providing access to students and developing compatible record  
3 keeping systems;

4 (4) a description of the activities, services and  
5 training to be provided by the program, including a plan to  
6 provide structure and support for the students in the college  
7 search, planning and application process;

8 (5) a description of the methods to be used to evaluate  
9 the outcomes and effectiveness of the program;

10 (6) an assurance that grant funds will be used to  
11 supplement and not supplant other Federal, State or local  
12 funds available to carry out activities of the type carried  
13 out under the grant;

14 (7) an explanation of the method used for calculating  
15 college enrollment rates for each high school served by the  
16 eligible school entity that is based on externally verified  
17 data;

18 (8) a plan to make the program sustainable over time,  
19 including the use of matching funds from Federal and local  
20 sources; and

21 (9) a description of the school entity's plan to work  
22 cooperatively, where applicable, with the program funded  
23 under Part H of Title VIII of the Higher Education Act of  
24 1965 (Public Law 89-329, 20 U.S.C. § 1161h et seq.),  
25 including the extent to which the school entity commits to  
26 using and leveraging:

27 (i) the needs assessment and recommendations;

28 (ii) the model for measuring college enrollment; and

29 (iii) comprehensive services.

30 (c) Method of calculating enrollment rate.--

1 (1) A method included in an application under subsection  
2 (b) (7):  
3 (i) shall, at a minimum, track students' first-time  
4 enrollment in an institution of higher education; and  
5 (ii) may track progress toward completion of a  
6 postsecondary degree.

7 (2) An eligible school entity may develop a method under  
8 subsection (b) (7) in conjunction with an existing public or  
9 private entity that currently maintains the method.

10 (d) Special consideration.--In awarding a grant under this  
11 act, the department shall give special consideration to an  
12 application from an eligible school entity serving schools with  
13 the highest percentages of poverty.

14 Section 5. Use of funds.

15 (a) General rule.--A grant recipient shall develop and  
16 implement or expand a program to increase the number of low-  
17 income students who enroll in postsecondary educational  
18 institutions, including institutions with competitive admissions  
19 criteria.

20 (b) Requirements for programs.--The program of a grant  
21 recipient funded under this act shall:

22 (1) provide professional development to high school  
23 teachers and school counselors in postsecondary education  
24 advising;

25 (2) implement a comprehensive college guidance program  
26 for the students in a high school served by a grant recipient  
27 that:

28 (i) ensures that all students and their parents or  
29 guardians are regularly notified throughout the students'  
30 time in high school, beginning in the first year of high

1 school, of:

2 (A) high school graduation requirements;

3 (B) college entrance requirements;

4 (C) the economic and social benefits of higher  
5 education;

6 (D) college expenses, including information  
7 about expenses by institutional type, differences  
8 between sticker price and net price and expenses  
9 beyond tuition; and

10 (E) the resources for paying for college,  
11 including the availability, eligibility and variety  
12 of financial aid;

13 (ii) provides assistance to students in registering  
14 for and preparing for college entrance tests;

15 (iii) provides one-on-one guidance and assistance to  
16 students in applying to an institution of higher  
17 education and in applying for Federal financial aid  
18 assistance and other State, local and private financial  
19 aid assistance and scholarships; and

20 (iv) provides not less than one meeting for each  
21 student, not later than the first semester of the first  
22 year of high school with school counselors or college  
23 access personnel, including personnel involved in  
24 programs funded under Chapters 1 and 2 of Subpart 2 of  
25 Part A of Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965  
26 (Public Law 89-329, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1070a-11 et seq. and  
27 1070a-21 et seq.), trained teachers or other  
28 professionals or organizations such as community-based  
29 organizations, approved by the school to discuss  
30 postsecondary options, outline postsecondary goals and

1 create a plan to achieve the goals, and provides not less  
2 than two meetings in each subsequent year to discuss  
3 progress on the plan; and

4 (3) ensure that each high school served by the grant  
5 recipient develops a comprehensive, school-wide plan of  
6 action to strengthen the college-going culture within the  
7 high school.

8 (c) Allowable use of program funds.--The program of a grant  
9 recipient funded under this act may:

10 (1) establish postsecondary planning classes for high  
11 school students to assist in the college preparation and  
12 application process;

13 (2) hire and train postsecondary coaches with expertise  
14 in the college-going process to supplement and not supplant  
15 existing school counselors by providing high school students  
16 with assistance in the college-going process;

17 (3) increase the number of school counselors who  
18 specialize in the college-going process;

19 (4) train student leaders to assist in the creation of a  
20 college-going culture;

21 (5) establish partnerships with programs funded under  
22 Chapters 1 and 2 of Subpart 2 of Part A of Title IV of the  
23 Higher Education Act of 1965, and with community and  
24 nonprofit organizations to increase college-going rates at  
25 high school served by the grant recipient;

26 (6) provide long-term postsecondary follow-up with  
27 graduates of the high school, including increasing alumni  
28 involvement in mentoring and advising roles within the high  
29 school;

30 (7) deliver college and career planning curriculum as a

1 stand-alone course, or embedded in other classes, or  
2 delivered through the guidance curriculum by the school  
3 counselor for all students in high school;

4 (8) create or maintain a postsecondary access center in  
5 the school setting that provides information on colleges and  
6 universities, career opportunities and financial aid options;  
7 and

8 (9) in the comprehensive college guidance program  
9 implemented under subsection (b) (2), provide opportunities  
10 for students to explore postsecondary opportunities outside  
11 of the high school setting, such as college fairs, career  
12 fairs, college tours, workplace visits or other similar  
13 activities.

14 (d) Requirement.--Grant funds made available under this act  
15 shall be used to supplement and not supplant other Federal,  
16 State and local funds available to carry out the activities  
17 described in this act.

18 Section 6. Technical assistance.

19 The department shall provide technical assistance to grant  
20 recipients through:

21 (1) assistance in the calculation and analysis of  
22 college-going rates for the grant recipients; and

23 (2) an annual analysis to each grant recipient  
24 recommending best practices based on a comparison of the  
25 grant recipient's data with that of high schools with similar  
26 demographics and resources.

27 Section 7. Reporting requirements.

28 A grant recipient shall collect and report annually to the  
29 department the information for the school entity and for a high  
30 school assisted under this act on the results of the activities

1 assisted under the grant as the department may reasonably  
2 require, including information on:

3 (1) the number and percentage of students who enroll in  
4 an institution of higher education in the school year  
5 immediately following the students' high school graduation as  
6 measured by externally verified school-wide college  
7 enrollment data;

8 (2) the number and percentage of students who graduate  
9 from high school on time with a regular high school diploma;

10 (3) the number and percentage of students at each grade  
11 level who are on track to graduate from high school on time  
12 and with a regular high school diploma;

13 (4) the number and percentage of senior high school  
14 students who apply to an institution of higher education and  
15 the average number of applications completed and submitted by  
16 students;

17 (5) the number and percentage of senior high school  
18 students who file the Free Application for Federal Student  
19 Aid forms;

20 (6) the number and percentage of students in grade 10  
21 who take early admissions assessments such as the Preliminary  
22 Scholastic Aptitude Test;

23 (7) the number and percentage of students in grades 11  
24 and 12 who take the Scholastic Aptitude Test or American  
25 College Testing examination and the students' mean scores on  
26 the assessments;

27 (8) where data are available, the number and percentage  
28 of students enrolled in remedial mathematics or English  
29 courses during their freshman year at an institution of  
30 higher education;

1 (9) the number and percentage of students in grades 11  
2 and 12 enrolled in not less than two of the following:

3 (i) a dual credit course; or

4 (ii) an Advanced Placement or International  
5 Baccalaureate course; and

6 (10) the number and percentage of students who scored  
7 proficient or advanced on Pennsylvania System of School  
8 Assessment tests in mathematics, science and English language  
9 arts.

10 Section 8. Reporting of data.

11 A grant recipient shall report to the department, if  
12 available, the data required under section 7. The data shall be  
13 disaggregated by categories, including gender, race, ethnicity  
14 and age.

15 Section 9. Evaluations by grantees.

16 A grant recipient shall:

17 (1) conduct periodic evaluations of the effectiveness of  
18 the activities carried out under the grant toward increasing  
19 school-wide college-going rates;

20 (2) use the evaluations under paragraph (1) to refine  
21 and improve activities conducted with the grant and the  
22 performance measures for the activities; and

23 (3) make the results of the evaluations under paragraph  
24 (1) publicly available, including by providing public notice  
25 of the availability.

26 Section 10. Report.

27 The department shall:

28 (1) conduct an independent evaluation, by grant or  
29 contract, of the programs carried out under this act,  
30 including an assessment of the impact of the program on high

1 school graduation rates and college-going rates; and  
2 (2) prepare and submit a report on the results of the  
3 evaluation described in paragraph (1) to the chairperson and  
4 the minority chairperson of the Education Committee of the  
5 Senate and the chairperson and the minority chairperson of  
6 the Education Committee of the House of Representatives.

7 Section 11. Duties of department.

8 The department shall adopt procedures, rules and forms  
9 necessary to implement this act.

10 Section 12. Appropriation.

11 The sum of \$25,000,000, or as much thereof as may be  
12 necessary, is hereby appropriated to the department to carry out  
13 the provisions of this act.

14 Section 13. Effective date.

15 This act shall take effect in 60 days.