
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 2176 Session of
2021

INTRODUCED BY MERCURI, N. NELSON, CIRESI, STRUZZI AND GLEIM,
DECEMBER 16, 2021

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, DECEMBER 16, 2021

AN ACT

1 Amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), entitled "An
2 act relating to the public school system, including certain
3 provisions applicable as well to private and parochial
4 schools; amending, revising, consolidating and changing the
5 laws relating thereto," establishing the Pennsylvania
6 Opportunity Pathways Program to distribute grants to schools
7 in need and underrepresented schools; providing for duties of
8 Department of Community and Economic Development; and
9 establishing the Pennsylvania Opportunity Pathways Program
10 Fund.

11 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
12 hereby enacts as follows:

13 Section 1. The act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known
14 as the Public School Code of 1949, is amended by adding an
15 article to read:

16 ARTICLE XX-L

17 PENNSYLVANIA OPPORTUNITY PATHWAYS PROGRAM

18 Section 2001-L. Definitions.

19 The following words and phrases when used in this article
20 shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
21 context clearly indicates otherwise:

22 "Applicant." A school-in-need or an underrepresented school

1 that submits an application under section 2004-L(a) for a grant
2 under the program.

3 "Department." The Department of Community and Economic
4 Development of the Commonwealth.

5 "Fund." The Pennsylvania Opportunity Pathways Program Fund
6 under section 2007-L(a).

7 "Grant." A grant provided by the department under the
8 program.

9 "Grant recipient." A school-in-need or an underrepresented
10 school that received a grant under the program.

11 "Program." The Pennsylvania Opportunity Pathways Program
12 established under section 2002-L.

13 "Public institution of higher education." A community
14 college or an institution which is part of the State System of
15 Higher Education under Article XX-A.

16 "Public school." Any of the following:

17 (1) A school district.

18 (2) An intermediate unit.

19 (3) An area career and technical school.

20 (4) A charter school as defined in section 1703-A.

21 (5) A regional charter school as defined in section
22 1703-A.

23 "School-in-need." A public school or public institution of
24 higher education that has a proportion greater than the
25 Statewide average of students who come from families with
26 household income levels below the Federal poverty line.

27 "Underrepresented school." A public school or public
28 institution of higher education that has a proportion greater
29 than the Statewide average of students who are demographically
30 underrepresented in the field of education, law, law enforcement

1 or health care, including mental health care, in this
2 Commonwealth.

3 Section 2002-L. Pennsylvania Opportunity Pathways Program.

4 The Pennsylvania Opportunity Pathways Program is established
5 in the department to distribute grants on a competitive basis to
6 schools-in-need and underrepresented schools to aid low-income
7 students and students who are underrepresented in the fields of
8 education, law, law enforcement and health care, including
9 mental health care, in this Commonwealth to pursue careers in
10 the fields of education, law, law enforcement and health care,
11 including mental health care. A school-in-need or an
12 underrepresented school may use a grant under the program for
13 any of the following:

14 (1) Academic enrichment initiatives.

15 (2) Opportunities for students to earn college credit.

16 (3) Opportunities for students to earn industry-
17 recognized qualifications and certifications.

18 (4) The identification of the qualifications and
19 certifications necessary to fill current and anticipated
20 employment needs of a field of employment.

21 (5) Initiatives to effectively prepare students for
22 success in postsecondary education.

23 (6) Work-based learning opportunities, including
24 workplace visits, internships, apprenticeships, mentorships
25 or employment opportunities.

26 (7) Mentorship programs in the fields of education, law,
27 law enforcement or health care, including mental health care.

28 Section 2003-L. Duties of department.

29 The department shall have the following duties:

30 (1) Establishing eligibility criteria, written

1 guidelines and an application process for applicants.

2 (2) Reviewing similar initiatives to the program in this
3 Commonwealth and other states for the purpose of establishing
4 and making available on the department's publicly accessible
5 Internet website a set of best practices and standards
6 designed to maximize the effectiveness of the program.

7 (3) Ensuring that grant recipients comply with the
8 department's best practices and standards as specified on the
9 department's publicly accessible Internet website under
10 paragraph (2).

11 Section 2004-L. Applications for grants.

12 (a) Applications.--A school-in-need or an underrepresented
13 school shall submit an application for a grant under the program
14 to the department on a form required by the department. The
15 application shall include all of the following information:

16 (1) The name, mailing address and telephone number of
17 the applicant.

18 (2) A statement of the amount of grant money sought by
19 the applicant.

20 (3) A verification that the applicant has:

21 (i) a proportion greater than the Statewide average
22 of students who come from families with household income
23 levels below the Federal poverty line; or

24 (ii) a proportion greater than the Statewide average
25 of students who are demographically underrepresented in
26 the field of education, law, law enforcement or health
27 care, including mental health care, in this Commonwealth.

28 (4) A detailed description of how the applicant will use
29 the grant in accordance with section 2002-L.

30 (5) A detailed description of how the applicant will

1 define success, monitor progress and make improvements
2 through the use of the grant in accordance with section 2002-
3 L.

4 (6) Any other information required by the department.

5 (b) Technical assistance.--The department shall provide
6 technical assistance to applicants as necessary to implement the
7 program.

8 (c) Review.--The following apply:

9 (1) No later than 90 days from the date of receiving an
10 application under subsection (a), the department shall review
11 the application and determine whether to approve or deny the
12 application. No later than 30 days from the date of making a
13 determination to approve or deny the application under this
14 paragraph, the department shall provide notice to the
15 applicant of the department's determination. Upon determining
16 that the application has met the requirements under
17 subsection (a), the department may approve the application
18 and award a grant under the program to the applicant for a
19 period of one year.

20 (2) The department may impose any other terms and
21 conditions on grants under the program as the department
22 determines is in the best interest of the Commonwealth and
23 the students who will be impacted by the grant.

24 (3) The department shall prioritize applications under
25 subsection (a) that propose initiatives in partnership
26 between other schools-in-need or underrepresented schools.

27 (d) Construction.--Nothing in this section shall be
28 construed to prohibit a school-in-need or an underrepresented
29 school from submitting a joint application under subsection (a)
30 with other schools-in-need or underrepresented schools within or

1 outside of the school district.

2 Section 2005-L. Evaluation of grants.

3 (a) Evaluation.--The department shall establish requirements
4 for a grant recipient to document information regarding the use
5 of a grant under the program to evaluate the success of the
6 program. The information shall include, if applicable, all of
7 the following information:

8 (1) The number of students who participated in
9 initiatives or opportunities funded by the grant.

10 (2) The demographics of students who participated in
11 initiatives or opportunities funded by the grant.

12 (3) The student retention rate of students who
13 participated in initiatives or opportunities funded by the
14 grant.

15 (4) The high school graduation rates of students who
16 participated in initiatives or opportunities funded by the
17 grant.

18 (5) The proportion of students who participated in
19 initiatives or opportunities funded by the grant and enrolled
20 in postsecondary education.

21 (6) The course of study of students who participated in
22 initiatives or opportunities funded by the grant and enrolled
23 in postsecondary education, including an addendum stating
24 whether the students are pursuing a course of study in a
25 field encouraged by the program.

26 (7) The postsecondary graduation rates of students who
27 participated in initiatives or opportunities funded by the
28 grant.

29 (8) The proportion of students who participated in
30 initiatives or opportunities funded by the grant who become

1 employed in a field encouraged by the program.

2 (9) Feedback from students, teachers and other
3 individuals regarding the program, including recommendations
4 for improving the program.

5 (10) A detailed description of the use of the grant,
6 including an itemized list of expenditures.

7 (11) Any other information the department deems
8 appropriate to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

9 (b) Annual reporting.--A grant recipient shall submit a
10 report containing the information specified under subsection (a)
11 for each year when the grant recipient receives a grant funding
12 under the program.

13 (c) Grant information.--The department shall annually
14 compile the information received in the reports under subsection
15 (b), the number of applications received under section 2004-L(a)
16 and the number and amount of grants awarded under the program
17 into an annual report. The department shall post the annual
18 report under this subsection on the department's publicly
19 accessible Internet website and provide the annual report to the
20 President pro tempore of the Senate, the Minority Leader of the
21 Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the
22 Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.

23 Section 2006-L. Renewal of grants.

24 (a) Application process.--The department shall develop an
25 application process for a grant recipient to receive a renewal
26 of grant funding under the program.

27 (b) Eligibility.--A grant recipient in the previous year may
28 apply for a renewal of grant funding. In processing a renewal
29 application, the department shall evaluate the effectiveness of
30 the grant recipient's use of the grant funding in the previous

1 year. The department shall prioritize renewing grant funding for
2 grant recipients who have a demonstrable record of effectively
3 using the grant funds.

4 (c) Review.--The department may impose conditions upon a
5 grant recipient or deny renewal of grant funding if the
6 department determines that the grant recipient's use of the
7 grant funding in the previous year was ineffective.

8 (d) Restrictions.--The renewal of grant funds shall be
9 subject to the following restrictions:

10 (1) In year two of participation in the program, the
11 amount of grant renewal funding provided by the department to
12 a grant recipient shall not exceed 80% of the amount of grant
13 funding provided to the grant recipient in year one of
14 participation in the program.

15 (2) In year three of participation in the program, the
16 amount of grant renewal funding provided by the department to
17 a grant recipient shall not exceed 60% of the amount of grant
18 funding provided to the grant recipient in year one of
19 participation in the program.

20 (3) In year four of participation in the program, the
21 amount of grant renewal funding provided by the department to
22 a grant recipient shall not exceed 40% of the amount of grant
23 funding provided to the grant recipient in year one of
24 participation in the program.

25 (4) In year five of participation in the program, the
26 amount of grant renewal funding provided by the department to
27 a grant recipient shall not exceed 20% of the amount of grant
28 funding provided to the grant recipient in year one of
29 participation in the program.

30 (5) The department may not provide grant renewal funding

1 to a grant recipient for more than five years.

2 Section 2007-L. Pennsylvania Opportunity Pathways Program Fund.

3 (a) Establishment.--The Pennsylvania Opportunity Pathways
4 Program Fund is established in the State Treasury as a special
5 fund. The money in the fund shall be used by the department to
6 implement the program.

7 (b) Funding.--The sum of \$500,000 shall be transferred from
8 money made available under section 2006-B to the fund on an
9 annual basis to be used exclusively by the department to
10 implement the program. The department shall deposit available
11 Federal, State, local and private money into the fund to
12 implement the program. The department shall actively seek and
13 apply for funding to implement the program.

14 Section 2008-L. Limitations.

15 The following shall apply:

16 (1) The aggregate amount of grants awarded under the
17 program shall not exceed the available funding for the
18 program.

19 (2) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a grant
20 awarded under the program shall not affect the State or local
21 funding received by a school-in-need or an underrepresented
22 school and the grant shall not be included in a school
23 district's budgeted total expenditure per average daily
24 membership used to calculate the amount to be paid to a
25 charter school under section 1725-A(a) (2) and (3).

26 (3) A grant recipient may use a grant awarded under the
27 program only for the purposes stated in the grant recipient's
28 application under section 2004-L(a). A grant recipient shall
29 repay any unused grant money to the department.

30 Section 2009-L. Outreach plan.

1 (a) Development.--The department shall develop an outreach
2 plan to annually inform schools-in-need and underrepresented
3 schools about the program.

4 (b) Allocation.---The department shall allocate \$5,000 of
5 the sum appropriated under section 2007-L(b) to implement the
6 outreach plan under subsection (a).

7 Section 2. This act shall take effect in 60 days.