

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE FREE 2 START SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

- 1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2018*) (a) As used in this section:
- 2 (1) "Award" means (A) the unpaid portion, if any, of a qualifying
3 student's eligible institutional costs after subtracting his or her
4 financial aid, or (B) five hundred dollars, whichever is greater;
- 5 (2) "Eligible institutional costs" means the tuition and required fees
6 for an individual student at a regional community-technical college
7 that are published by the regional community-technical college;
- 8 (3) "Financial aid" means the sum of all scholarships, grants and
9 federal, state and institutional aid received by a qualifying student.
10 "Financial aid" does not include any federal, state or private student
11 loans received by a qualifying student;
- 12 (4) "Qualifying student" means any person who (A) graduated from
13 a public or nonpublic high school in the state not more than two years
14 prior to enrolling at a regional community-technical college, (B) is (i)
15 enrolled for the first time at a regional community-technical college for
16 the fall semester of 2018 or any semester thereafter, and (ii) enrolled as
17 a full-time student, (C) is classified as an in-state student pursuant to
18 section 10a-29 of the general statutes, (D) is making satisfactory
19 academic progress while enrolled at a regional community-technical
20 college, (E) has completed the Free Application for Federal Student
21 Aid or an institutionally approved student aid application, (F) has an

22 expected family contribution, as computed from the student's Free
23 Application for Federal Student Aid, of five thousand three hundred
24 dollars or less, and (G) has accepted all available financial aid; and

25 (5) "Full-time student" means a student who is enrolled at a regional
26 community-technical college and who is carrying (A) twelve or more
27 semester credit hours in a semester, or (B) thirty or more semester
28 credit hours in an academic year.

29 (b) The Board of Regents for Higher Education shall establish a Free
30 2 Start Scholarship program to annually make awards to qualifying
31 students for eligible institutional costs. An award shall be available to a
32 qualifying student for the first two academic years at a regional
33 community-technical college, provided the qualifying student meets
34 and continues to meet the requirements of this section.

35 (c) Each regional community-technical college shall conduct a
36 financial and academic audit to determine the number of qualifying
37 students enrolled at the regional community-technical college during
38 each semester and the amount of the award to be made to each
39 qualifying student. A regional community-technical college shall not
40 use an award to supplant any state or institutional aid otherwise
41 available to a qualifying student. The amount of the annual
42 appropriation to be allocated to each regional community-technical
43 college for the Free 2 Start Scholarship program shall be the sum of all
44 awards made to qualifying students enrolled at the regional
45 community-technical college during each semester. If the total eligible
46 institutional costs for qualifying students exceeds the amount of the
47 annual appropriation for the Free 2 Start Scholarship program in any
48 year, the Board of Regents for Higher Education shall prioritize
49 allocations in accordance with criteria developed by the board. Not
50 later than September first and February first, annually, each regional
51 community-technical college shall report such award data to the Board
52 of Regents for Higher Education. Each regional community-technical
53 college shall expend all of the moneys received under the Free 2 Start
54 Scholarship program as direct financial assistance only for eligible

55 institutional costs.

56 (d) Any qualifying student receiving an award under this section
57 shall participate in a volunteer-based mentorship and counseling
58 program, as prescribed by the Board of Regents for Higher Education.

59 (e) Not later than January 1, 2019, and annually thereafter, the Board
60 of Regents for Higher Education shall submit a report, in accordance
61 with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint
62 standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of
63 matters relating to higher education and employment advancement
64 and appropriations regarding the Free 2 Start Scholarship program.

65 Sec. 2. (*Effective July 1, 2018*) The Planning Commission for Higher
66 Education, established pursuant to section 10a-11b of the general
67 statutes, shall design and develop an implementation plan for a
68 scholarship program that provides awards to students to cover the
69 educational costs associated with full-time enrollment at public
70 institutions of higher education during the final two semesters of an
71 associate degree program and during the final four semesters of a
72 bachelor's degree program. In designing and developing the
73 implementation plan for the scholarship program, the commission
74 shall (1) develop eligibility criteria for students following an
75 examination of expected family contributions, as computed from a
76 student's Free Application for Federal Student Aid, (2) specify the total
77 amount of an award that a student may receive and which educational
78 costs will be covered by an award, (3) analyze the cost of administering
79 the scholarship program, (4) consider funding sources for creating and
80 sustaining the scholarship program, and (5) establish a timeframe for
81 the commencement of the scholarship program. Not later than October
82 1, 2019, the commission shall submit a report, in accordance with the
83 provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing
84 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters
85 relating to higher education that includes the design and
86 implementation plan for the scholarship program.

87 Sec. 3. (*Effective July 1, 2018*) The sum of five million dollars is

88 appropriated to the Board of Regents for Higher Education, from the
89 General Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, for the
90 administration of the Free 2 Start Scholarship program, established
91 pursuant to section 1 of this act.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2018</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2018</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2018</i>	New section