



General Assembly

Substitute Bill No. 273

January Session, 2019



AN ACT CONCERNING DEBT-FREE COLLEGE.

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

- 1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2019*) (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 that are published by the regional
7 community-technical college in which the student is enrolled,
8 including the costs of tuition and required fees for summer courses.
9 "Eligible institutional costs" does not include the costs for an intensive
10 semester of remedial support or a transitional college readiness
11 program, as described in subsections (c) and (d) of section 10a-157a of
12 the general statutes;
- 13 (3) "Financial aid" means the sum of all scholarships, grants and
14 federal, state and institutional aid received by a qualifying student.
15 "Financial aid" does not include any federal, state or private student
16 loans received by a qualifying student;
- 17 (4) "Qualifying student" means any person who (A) graduated from
18 a public or nonpublic high school in the state not more than two years

19 prior to enrolling at a regional community-technical college, (B) enrolls
20 as a full-time student for the fall semester of 2020, or any semester
21 thereafter, for the first time at a regional community-technical college
22 and continues to be enrolled as a full-time student at a regional
23 community-technical college, (C) is classified as an in-state student
24 pursuant to section 10a-29 of the general statutes, (D) is making
25 satisfactory academic progress while enrolled at a regional
26 community-technical college and maintains a minimum cumulative
27 grade point average of 2.5 each academic year, (E) has completed the
28 Free Application for Federal Student Aid, (F) has an expected family
29 contribution for educational costs, as computed from the student's Free
30 Application for Federal Student Aid, of seven thousand five hundred
31 dollars or less, and (G) has accepted all available financial aid; and

32 (5) "Full-time student" means a student who is enrolled at a regional
33 community-technical college and who is carrying thirty or more credit
34 hours in an academic year.

35 (b) Before the start of the fall semester of 2020, the Board of Regents
36 for Higher Education shall establish a debt-free community college
37 program to annually make awards to qualifying students for eligible
38 institutional costs. An award shall be available to a qualifying student
39 for the first sixty credit hours, with the exception of remedial credit
40 hours, earned by the qualifying student during the first twenty-four
41 months that such student is enrolled at a regional community-technical
42 college, provided the qualifying student meets and continues to meet
43 the requirements of this section.

44 (c) Before the start of the fall semester of 2020, and each semester
45 thereafter, each regional community-technical college shall conduct a
46 financial and academic audit to determine the number of qualifying
47 students enrolled at the regional community-technical college during
48 each semester, the total number of credit hours each qualifying student
49 has earned while enrolled at the regional community-technical college
50 and the amount of the award to be made to each qualifying student
51 under this section. A regional community-technical college shall not

52 use an award to supplant any state or institutional aid otherwise
53 available to a qualifying student. The amount of the annual
54 appropriation to be allocated to each regional community-technical
55 college for the debt-free community college program shall be the sum
56 of all awards made to qualifying students enrolled at the regional
57 community-technical college for each semester during the prior fiscal
58 year. If the sum of all awards made to qualifying students exceeds the
59 amount of the annual appropriation for the debt-free community
60 college program in any year, the Board of Regents for Higher
61 Education shall give priority in its allocations to the payment of
62 eligible institutional costs over minimum awards and in accordance
63 with criteria developed by the board. Not later than September first
64 and February first, annually, each regional community-technical
65 college shall report the sum of all awards made to qualifying students
66 and the results from the financial and academic audit each semester to
67 the Board of Regents for Higher Education. Each regional community-
68 technical college shall expend all of the moneys received under the
69 debt-free community college program as direct financial assistance
70 only for eligible institutional costs.

71 (d) Not later than January 1, 2021, and annually thereafter, the
72 Board of Regents for Higher Education shall report, in accordance with
73 the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint
74 standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of
75 matters relating to higher education and employment advancement
76 and appropriations regarding the debt-free community college
77 program.

78 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2019*) The month of January in each
79 year shall be known as "FAFSA Month". On or before January 1, 2020,
80 the Board of Regents for Higher Education shall implement a program
81 to host events for high school seniors and their families in each region
82 of the state throughout the month of January in each year. During such
83 events the board shall provide assistance to the high school seniors
84 and their families in completing the Free Application for Federal

85 Student Aid with the goal of increasing the number of such
86 applications made by state residents each year.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2019</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2019</i>	New section

HED *Joint Favorable Subst.*