OLR Bill Analysis
sHB 5832

AN ACT CONCERNING EMERGENCY EXPENSE GRANT PROGRAMS AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

SUMMARY

This bill allows public higher education institutions to establish an emergency expense grant program to award a grant to a student experiencing an unexpected financial hardship that hinders such student’s ability to complete his or her degree. Financial hardships may include, but are not limited to, expenses related to childcare, medical care, or transportation.

The bill requires the Office of Higher Education (OHE), within available appropriations and starting annually by September 1, 2020, to provide matching grants to such institutions that apply for them. OHE may award up to $500,000 in the aggregate during any fiscal year. The bill also establishes reporting requirements for institutions that receive matching grants.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2019

EMERGENCY EXPENSE GRANT PROGRAM

Grant Application or Nomination

Under the bill, a student enrolled at a public higher education institution that has established an emergency expense grant program is eligible to receive an award through application to the institution or nomination by an employee of the institution. The application or nomination must include (1) an explanation of the financial hardship, (2) documentation verifying emergency expenses, and (3) any other information the institution requires. Institutions are allowed, but not required, to award such grants.

Funding Sources

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Under the bill, an institution establishing such a program may (1) accept private donations, (2) allocate state and certain other institutional funds, or (3) by July 1, 2020, and annually thereafter, apply to OHE for a state matching grant. For these purposes, “state and certain other institutional funds” are (1) funds appropriated or proceeds of bonds authorized by the General Assembly, (2) revenue generated from tuition or any other source, and (3) funds collected from student fees, housing fees, or dining services.

The bill requires an institution to maintain a separate, non-lapsing grant program account to receive a state matching grant, and to deposit into this account (1) all private donations for the program, (2) all state and certain other institutional funds the institution allocates for the program, and (3) any state matching grant funds received.

A state matching grant must equal the total amount of private donations the institution accepted for the program during the previous fiscal year. If the amount of state matching grants requested in any fiscal year exceeds the amount available to OHE for the program, the matching grants must be reduced proportionately.

**Reporting Requirements**

Under the bill, an institution receiving these matching grants must, beginning by July 1, 2021, annually report to OHE and the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee on (1) the number of emergency grant applications awarded and received, (2) the average and total dollar amounts of the grants awarded and requested, (3) the reasons grants were requested, (4) the graduation rates among grant recipients and the general student body, and (5) any additional information as requested by OHE.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 14  Nay 8  (03/14/2019)