



**Substitute House Bill No. 5239**

**Public Act No. 24-117**

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE PATH PROGRAM AND AMENDING THE CONNECTICUT COLLEGIATE AWARENESS AND PREPARATION PROGRAM.**

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

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2024*) (a) As part of the minority advancement program, the Office of Higher Education shall establish a program to be known as the "Preparation for Academic Transition to Higher Education" or "PATH" program. For the fiscal year ending on June 30, 2025, and each fiscal year thereafter, the office shall allocate not more than one hundred thousand dollars, within available appropriations, to award grants to any nonprofit community-based organization in the state that provides assistance to students who reside in the state and are in grade eleven or twelve with (1) completing applications to postsecondary education programs, (2) completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid or an application for institutional financial aid established pursuant to section 10a-161d of the general statutes, including, but not limited to, through informational events and presentations concerning such financial aid applications, and (3) securing education scholarships and grants to finance attendance in a postsecondary education program.

(b) The Office of Higher Education shall award grants under the

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PATH program on a competitive basis to any nonprofit community-based organization that (1) provided the types of assistance specified in subsection (a) of this section during the academic year prior to the year in which the grant will be awarded, and (2) will provide, cooperatively with the school administrators of a public high school in the state, such assistance during the academic year for which the grant will be awarded. The office shall establish procedures for the submission of grant applications for said program and shall review such grant applications on the basis of an evaluation format developed by the office, that shall include, but need not be limited to, preference for such nonprofit community-based organizations that provide such assistance in a school district designated as an alliance school district, pursuant to section 10-262u of the general statutes, for the academic year in which the grant will be awarded. Grants shall be awarded in amounts not exceeding twenty thousand dollars and not less than fifteen thousand dollars and shall be available for the duration of the academic year for which such grant is awarded. If the office finds that any such grant is being used for any purpose that is not in conformity with the purposes of the PATH program, the office may require repayment of the grant to the state.

Sec. 2. Section 10a-11a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

(a) As used in this section, "collegiate awareness and preparation program" means a program that provides outreach and services to middle school and high school students to prepare such students for successful completion of postsecondary education at institutions of higher education.

[(a)] (b) As part of the minority advancement program, the Office of Higher Education shall establish a Connecticut collegiate awareness and preparation program to develop linkages with public school systems targeted by the office for the purpose of providing motivation and skills

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development for middle school or high school [underachievers] students who are disadvantaged, including, but not limited to, students from low-income families and prospective first-generation postsecondary education students.

[(b)] (c) Funding for said program shall be on a competitive basis open to all [Connecticut] institutions of higher education in the state. The Office of Higher Education shall issue a request for proposals to all [Connecticut higher educational] such institutions. A panel shall review applications on the basis of an evaluation format developed by said office. Payment [will] shall be made under contractual agreements between the office and the grant recipients.

Approved June 5, 2024