https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bills/BillView.asp?BillNumber=S2356

- 1 - C.18A:71B-2.4
- 2 - C.18A:71B-5.1
- 3 - C.18A:71B-85a
- 4 - C.18A:71B-86.4c

P.L. 2020, CHAPTER 31, ***approved May 15, 2020***
Senate, No. 2356

AN ACT concerning student financial aid and the 2020 public health state of emergency and supplementing various parts of the statutory law.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. The Higher Education Student Assistance Authority shall exclude the spring 2020 semester from a student's total lifetime eligibility limits for all State financial aid programs administered pursuant to N.J.S.18A:71B-1 et seq., if the student was unable to complete the semester due to the public health state of emergency declared to exist in New Jersey by Executive Order 103 dated March 9, 2020.

2. The Higher Education Student Assistance Authority shall waive the amounts that a student is required to return under N.J.S.18A:71B-5, if the institution has already disbursed the student's State financial aid and the student withdraws or reduces his credits to below full-time, or in the case of a part-time State tuition aid grant reduces his credits to below half-time, due to the public health state of emergency declared to exist in New Jersey by Executive Order 103 dated March 9, 2020.

3. Notwithstanding any law or regulation to the contrary, a student enrolled in a county college in the 2019-2020 academic year shall remain eligible for a scholarship under the NJ STARS Program in the third semester of county college enrollment. To remain eligible for the scholarship in the fourth and fifth semesters of county college enrollment, a student who was enrolled in the 2019-2020 academic year shall attain a grade point average of at least 3.0 by the start of the student's fourth semester of county college enrollment.

4. a. Notwithstanding any law or regulation to the contrary, a student enrolled in a county college in the 2019-2020 academic year shall attain a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 upon graduation from the county college to be eligible for a scholarship under the NJ STARS II Program for the student's third academic year of study.

b. Notwithstanding any law or regulation to the contrary, a student enrolled in a four-year institution of higher education in the 2019-2020 academic year shall remain eligible for a scholarship under the NJ STARS II Program in his third semester of study at a four-year institution. To remain eligible for a scholarship in the fourth semester of study, a student who was enrolled in the 2019-2020 academic year shall attain a grade point average of at least a 3.25 based on the student's performance during the first three semesters of study at the four-year institution.

5. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill addresses certain issues related to State financial aid programs that have arisen due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill provides that the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority will exclude the spring 2020 semester from a student's total lifetime eligibility limits for all State financial aid programs, if the student was unable to complete the semester due to the public health state of emergency declared by Governor Murphy through Executive Order 103. The bill also provides that if a student withdraws or reduces his credits to below full-time, or in the case of a part-time State tuition aid grant (TAG) reduces his credits below half-time, due to the public health state of emergency and the institution has already disbursed the student's State financial aid, the authority will waive the State financial aid amounts that a student would be required to return under existing law.

The bill also makes changes to the New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarship (NJ STARS) Program and the New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarship II (NJ STARS II) Program. The bill provides that a student enrolled in a county college in the 2019-2020 academic year will remain eligible for the NJ STARS scholarship in the third semester of county college enrollment. In order to remain eligible for the scholarship in the fourth and fifth semesters of county college enrollment, a student who was enrolled in the 2019-2020 academic year must attain a grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0 by the start of the student's fourth semester of county college enrollment. Under current law, after the first year of enrollment at the county college, the student continues to be eligible for the NJ STARS scholarship if he attains a GPA of at least 3.0 by the start of the student's second year of county college enrollment.

The bill provides that a student enrolled in a county college in the 2019-2020 academic year must attain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 upon graduation from the county college to be eligible for an NJ STARS II scholarship for the student's third academic year of study. Current law requires a student to attain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.25 upon graduation from the county college to receive the NJ STARS II scholarship for his third academic year of study.

In addition, the bill provides that a student enrolled in a four-year institution of higher education in the 2019-2020 academic year will remain eligible for the NJ STARS II scholarship in his third semester of study at the four-year institution. In order to remain eligible for a scholarship in the fourth semester of study, a student who was enrolled in the 2019-2020 academic year must attain a grade point average of at least a 3.25 based on the student's performance during the first three semesters of study at the four-year institution. Current law provides that a student will be eligible to receive an NJSTARS II scholarship for his fourth academic year of study if, based on his performance during the third academic year of study, he attains a GPA of at least 3.25. All eligibility requirements for receipt of the NJ STARS and NJ STARS II scholarships, other than those altered pursuant to the provisions of the bill, will remain in effect.

Provides relief to students receiving State financial aid to address special circumstances due to 2020 public health state of emergency.