



Ohio Legislative Service Commission

Bill Analysis

Hannah K. Wann

H.B. 27

131st General Assembly
(As Introduced)

Reps. Ramos, Driehaus, Antonio, Patterson, Boyd, Rezabek, Lepore-Hagan, Phillips, Reece, Celebrezze, Fedor, Sheehy

BILL SUMMARY

- Creates the Finish Fund and the Finish Reserve Fund to provide grants to students who are nearing completion of their undergraduate degrees and display financial need or hardship.
- Makes an appropriation.

CONTENT AND OPERATION

Finish Fund grant program

The bill requires the Chancellor of Higher Education to establish and administer the Finish Fund to provide grants to eligible students nearing completion of their associate or bachelor's degrees.¹ The Chancellor must begin accepting and reviewing applications and awarding grants under the fund not later than 180 days after the bill's effective date.²

Eligible students

In order to qualify for a Finish Fund grant, students must:

(1) Be enrolled in an associate or bachelor's degree program at a state institution of higher education or a private nonprofit college or university;

¹ R.C. 3333.27(B). The bill refers to the "Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents," but H.B. 64 of the 131st General Assembly, enacted after the bill was introduced, changed the name of the Chancellor and renamed the administrative office of the Ohio Board of Regents as the "Department of Higher Education."

² R.C. 3333.27(E).

(2) Be a resident of Ohio;

(3) Be making satisfactory academic progress, as defined by the financial aid office, or equivalent, of the institution in which the student is enrolled;

(4) Maintain at least a 2.5 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale, or the equivalent;

(5) Have declared an academic major or program for which the student earns credit;

(6) If the student is enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, would be considered a junior or a senior as determined by the credits the student has completed toward the student's degree program, or if the student is enrolled in an associate degree program, the student has completed 50% or more of the coursework required for the student's declared academic program; and

(7) Display financial need based on the U.S. Department of Education's method of determining financial need, or based on demonstrated financial hardship as determined by the Chancellor.³

Administration

The bill requires the Chancellor to adopt a policy by which to solicit, accept, and review applications for the Finish Fund not later than 180 days after the bill's effective date. The policy must include, but not be limited to all of the following:

(1) A method for determining the amount of each grant awarded to an eligible student. In calculating the amount, the bill requires the Chancellor to consider the student's remaining instructional and general charges or tuition and room and board or off-campus living expenses after the student's other funding sources are applied. The institution in which the student is enrolled must certify instructional and general charges, tuition, and room and board or determine the student's off-campus living expenses.

(2) A method for paying the grant to the eligible student through the institution in which the student is enrolled; and

(3) Disbursement of any surplus that remains once the grant has been applied to instructional and general charges or tuition owed to the student to be used for books, room and board, or any other costs related to attendance at the institution.

³ R.C. 3333.27(A).

The bill permits the Chancellor to adopt additional program guidelines and student eligibility qualifications for the Finish Fund, so long as they help to identify students most at risk of leaving an institution before completing a degree program due to financial hardship and students most likely to complete a degree program with additional funding.⁴

Priorities for awards

For academic years in which the amounts available to support the program are inadequate to provide grants to all eligible students, the bill prioritizes the awarding of grants to certain eligible students. The bill prohibits the Chancellor from reducing the dollar value of grants to increase the number of eligible students who receive grants. Eligible students must have applied for and, if received, used the entirety of specified forms of financial aid (see below) and are still unable to meet the cost of attending the institution, including room and board, as determined by the institution's financial aid office. The forms of aid the bill requires include: (a) a Pell grant or other federal financial need-based grant, (b) the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG),⁵ (c) any grants or scholarships awarded to the student and disbursed by the institution of higher education in which the student is enrolled, and (d) a federal subsidized loan. The bill prioritizes awards to students as follows:

(1) First, to seniors in a bachelor's degree program who applied for, and if received, used the entirety of the forms of aid listed in (a) through (d) above. For these students, the bill includes off-campus living expenses in the costs of attending the institution.

(2) Second, to juniors in a bachelor's degree program who applied for, and if received, used the entirety of the forms of aid listed in (a) through (d) above.

(3) Third, to seniors in a bachelor's degree program who applied for, and if received, used the entirety of the forms of aid listed in (a) through (c) above (that is, all except subsidized loans).

(4) Fourth, to juniors in a bachelor's degree program who applied for, and if received, used the entirety of the forms of aid listed in (a) through (c) above.

(5) Fifth, to students who have completed 50% or more of the coursework required for the student's declared academic program for an associate degree who

⁴ R.C. 3333.27(C).

⁵ R.C. 3333.122, not in the bill.



applied for, and if received, used the entirety of the forms of aid listed in (a) through (c) above.⁶

Institution reports

The Chancellor must require state institutions of higher education and nonprofit private colleges and universities to report all of the following at the end of each academic year:

(1) The number of students enrolled in the institution who receive a Finish Fund grant;

(2) The average dollar amount of grants, and the lowest and highest dollar amounts of awards granted;

(3) The number of students who receive grants who complete their academic programs;

(4) The number of students who receive a grant who fail to complete their academic programs, disaggregated by the reason for the inability to complete the program, including, but not limited to, dropping out of school and failure; and

(5) The number of students still enrolled in the institution and taking courses, but have neither completed nor failed to earn degrees.⁷

Finish Reserve Fund

The bill establishes the Finish Reserve Fund into which the Chancellor must transfer any funds not awarded under the Finish Fund in a fiscal year to use for awarding grants in subsequent fiscal years.⁸

Appropriation

The bill appropriates \$10 million for the Finish Fund in each of fiscal years 2016 and 2017.⁹

⁶ R.C. 3333.27(D).

⁷ R.C. 3333.27(F).

⁸ R.C. 3333.27(B) and 3333.271.

⁹ Section 2.



HISTORY

ACTION

DATE

Introduced

02-03-15

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