

CHAPTER 360

AN ACT concerning eligibility for the NJ STARS and NJ STARS II Programs and amending P.L.2008, c.124, P.L.2004, c.59, and P.L.2005, c.359.

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

1. Section 5 of P.L.2004, c.59 (C.18A:71B-85) is amended to read as follows:

C.18A:71B-85 NJ STARS scholarships; eligibility.

5. a. A scholarship under the NJ STARS Program shall cover the full cost of tuition, subject to the prior application of other grants and scholarships against those costs as provided under paragraph (2) of subsection c. of this section, for up to 18 credit hours in any semester, for an eligible student enrolled in a full-time course of study at the New Jersey county college serving the student's county of residence. An otherwise eligible student who demonstrates to the authority, in accordance with such criteria and by means of such documentation as the authority shall establish by regulation, that the county college serving the student's county of residence does not offer the curriculum that the student chooses to study shall be eligible for such scholarship at another New Jersey county college offering that curriculum. The amount of any scholarship allowed hereunder to a student at a county college serving a county other than the student's county of residence shall be computed as though the student were a resident of the county served by that college, and the college shall likewise compute the amount of any additional payment, required with respect to the enrollment of that student for credit hours of study during a semester in which the scholarship is awarded that are not covered by that scholarship, as though the student were a resident of the county.

b. A student shall be eligible for a scholarship under the NJ STARS Program for up to five semesters, including summer sessions. The scholarship shall be payable for the first year of enrollment in a county college to a student who:

(1) has graduated high school and, in the case of a student who graduates in the 2013-2014 school year and thereafter, whose class rank at the completion of the 11th grade or 12th grade was in the top 15.0% of the student's high school class, provided that in the case of students graduating from high schools that do not calculate the class rank of their students, the student's ranking at the completion of the 11th grade or 12th grade shall be determined by the high school in consultation with the authority; and

(2) completed a rigorous high school course of study in accordance with standards established by the Secretary of Higher Education in consultation with the Commissioner of Education.

During a student's enrollment in a county college after the first year of enrollment, the scholarship shall be payable to that student if the student attains a grade point average of at least 3.0 by the start of the student's second year of county college enrollment. A student who attains a grade point average of less than 3.0 at the start of the second semester of the student's first year of county college enrollment shall participate in an enrichment program designed by the county college during the second semester of the student's first year of enrollment.

c. To be eligible to receive a scholarship under the NJ STARS Program a student shall:

(1) be a State resident pursuant to guidelines established by the authority. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 1 of P.L.1979, c.361 (C.18A:62-4) or any other section of law to the contrary, a dependent child of a parent or guardian who has been transferred to a military installation located in this State shall be considered a resident of this State for the purposes of qualifying for an NJ STARS scholarship;

(2) have applied for all other available forms of State and federal need-based grants and merit scholarships, exclusive of loans, the full amount of which grants and scholarships shall be applied to tuition to reduce the amount of any scholarship that the student shall receive under the provisions of this act;

(3) except as otherwise provided pursuant to subsection a. or subsection c. of section 3 of P.L.2008, c.124 (C.18A:71B-85.2), be enrolled in a full-time course of study at a New Jersey county college;

(4) have graduated from high school in 2004 or later, and not earlier than the calendar year two years prior to the first calendar year in which a scholarship payment is to be made; and

(5) except as otherwise provided pursuant to subsection a. of section 3 of P.L.2008, c.124 (C.18A:71B-85.2), maintain continuous enrollment in a full-time course of study, unless on medical leave due to the illness of the student or a member of the student's immediate family or emergency leave because of a family emergency, which medical or emergency leave shall have been approved by the county college, or unless called to partial or full mobilization for State or federal active duty as a member of the National Guard or a Reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States.

d. A student who is dismissed for academic or disciplinary reasons from a county college shall no longer be eligible for a scholarship under this act. If a student participating in the program is dismissed for disciplinary reasons, the student shall repay in full all amounts received under the program. The county college shall be responsible for collecting the repayment, or the amount of any overpayment or other improper payment, of any State awards under the program, in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.18A:71B-10.

e. A student scholarship under the NJ STARS Program may be renewed upon the student's filing of a renewal financial aid application and providing evidence that the student has satisfied the requirements pursuant to subsection b. of this section.

2. Section 3 of P.L.2008, c.124 (C.18A:71B-85.2) is amended to read as follows:

C.18A:71B-85.2 Option to take fewer credits; eligibility for NJ STARS II scholarship.

3. a. A student who receives an NJ STARS scholarship shall be eligible to take less than 12 credits in the final semester if the county college determines that the student needs to complete less than 12 credits in that semester to complete the degree program.

b. In the case of a student who is enrolled in an associate degree program regularly requiring six semesters, the student shall not receive an NJ STARS scholarship for the sixth semester but shall maintain eligibility for the New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarship II (NJ STARS II) Program established pursuant to P.L.2005, c.359 (C.18A:71B-86.1 et seq.), provided that the student meets the requirements for receipt of an NJ STARS II scholarship.

c. Beginning in the 2015-2016 academic year, a student who receives an NJ STARS scholarship or a student who is already in the NJ STARS program shall be eligible to take less than 12 credits in a semester if: the student provides to the county college a written note from a physician or other licensed health care professional indicating the student's need to take a reduced number of credits due to a physical or mental health condition; or the student provides to the county college, in such form as determined by the authority, verification of the recent death of the student's parent or spouse. To receive an NJ STARS payment for the semester, a student who receives a medical exemption or an exemption due to the recent death of the student's parent or spouse from the full-time course of study requirement

pursuant to this subsection shall enroll for a minimum of six credits in the semester. A student shall receive an additional semester of NJ STARS eligibility for each semester the student receives an exemption from the full-time course of study requirement pursuant to this subsection, not to exceed five additional semesters.

3. Section 4 of P.L.2005, c.359 (C.18A:71B-86.4) is amended to read as follows:

C.18A:71B-86.4 Eligibility for NJ STARS II; scholarship amounts.

4. a. A scholarship under the NJ STARS II Program shall be applied toward the cost of tuition or in the case of a student who receives a Tuition Aid Grant toward the cost of tuition and fees, subject to the prior application of other grants and scholarships against such costs as provided under paragraph (2) of subsection e. of this section, for an eligible student enrolled in a full-time course of study at a New Jersey four-year public or independent institution of higher education. A scholarship under the NJ STARS II Program shall be paid to the institution in the amount of \$1,250 per semester. The cost of a scholarship shall be paid 100% by the State. Any cost of attendance that is not covered by the NJ STARS II scholarship or other available forms of grants and scholarships shall be paid by the student.

b. A student shall be eligible for a scholarship under the NJ STARS II Program for up to four semesters, excluding summer sessions, at a New Jersey four-year public or independent institution of higher education.

c. A student shall be eligible to receive a scholarship under the NJ STARS II Program for the student's third academic year of study if the student: has an annual family income, both taxable and non-taxable, as derived from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the academic year, of less than \$250,000; attained an associate's degree from a New Jersey county college; except as otherwise provided pursuant to subsection c. of section 2 and subsection b. of section 3 of P.L.2008, c.124 (C.18A:71B-85.2), received a scholarship under the "New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarship (NJ STARS) Program Act," P.L.2004, c.59 (C.18A:71B-81 et seq.), for each semester of study in the county college, or was eligible for but did not receive a scholarship under NJ STARS because the student's tuition was fully covered by other State or federal need-based grants or merit scholarships, or was eligible for but did not receive a scholarship under NJ STARS because the student was enrolled while a high school student in county college courses and received an associate's degree in accordance with a joint program offered by the student's school district and a county college; attains a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.25 upon graduation from county college; enrolls in a baccalaureate degree program at a New Jersey four-year public or independent institution of higher education for the third academic year of study in the academic year immediately following the student's attainment of an associate's degree; and meets the criteria set forth in subsection e. of this section. A grade for credits earned during a summer semester shall for the purposes of this subsection be included in the calculation of the cumulative grade point average.

d. A student shall be eligible to receive a scholarship under the NJ STARS II Program for the student's fourth academic year of study if the student: received a scholarship under the NJ STARS II Program for the student's third academic year of study pursuant to subsection c. of this section; based on the student's performance during the third academic year of study, attained a grade point average of at least 3.25; and meets the criteria set forth in subsection e. of this section. A grade for credits earned during a summer semester shall for the purposes of this subsection be included in the calculation of the grade point average for the preceding academic year.

e. To be eligible to receive a scholarship under the NJ STARS II Program, a student shall:

(1) be a State resident pursuant to guidelines established by the authority. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 1 of P.L.1979, c.361 (C.18A:62-4) or any other section of law to the contrary, a dependent child of a parent or guardian who has been transferred to a military installation located in this State shall be considered a resident of this State for the purposes of qualifying for an NJ STARS II scholarship;

(2) have applied for all other available forms of State and federal need-based grants and merit scholarships, exclusive of loans, the full amount of which grants and scholarships shall be applied to tuition, and fee charges if applicable, to reduce the amount of any scholarship that the student shall receive under the provisions of P.L.2005, c.359 (C.18A:71B-86.1 et seq.);

(3) except as otherwise provided pursuant to subsection h. of this section, be enrolled in a full-time course of study at a four-year public or independent institution of higher education; and

(4) maintain continuous enrollment in a full-time course of study, unless on medical leave due to the illness of the student or a member of the student's immediate family or emergency leave because of a family emergency, which medical or emergency leave shall have been approved by the four-year public or independent institution of higher education, or unless called to partial or full mobilization for State or federal active duty as a member of the National Guard or a Reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States.

f. A student who is dismissed for academic or disciplinary reasons from a four-year public or independent institution of higher education shall no longer be eligible for a scholarship under this act. If a student participating in the program is dismissed for disciplinary reasons, the student shall repay in full all amounts received under the program. The four-year public or independent institution of higher education shall be responsible for collecting the repayment, or the amount of any overpayment or other improper payment, of any State awards under the program, in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.18A:71B-10.

g. A student scholarship under the NJ STARS II Program may be renewed upon the student's filing of a renewal financial aid application and providing evidence that the student has satisfied the requirements pursuant to this section.

h. Beginning in the 2015-2016 academic year, a student who receives an NJ STARS II scholarship or a student who is already in the NJ STARS II program shall be eligible to take less than 12 credits in a semester if: the student provides to the four-year public or independent institution of higher education a written note from a physician or other licensed health care professional indicating the student's need to take a reduced number of credits due to a physical or mental health condition; or the student provides to the institution, in such form as determined by the authority, verification of the recent death of the student's parent or spouse. To receive an NJ STARS II payment for the semester, a student who receives a medical exemption or an exemption due to the recent death of the student's parent or spouse from the full-time course of study requirement pursuant to this subsection shall enroll for a minimum of six credits in the semester. A part-time NJ STARS II award shall be prorated against the full-time NJ STARS award as follows: an eligible student enrolled with six to eight credits shall receive one-half of the value of a full-time award, and an eligible student enrolled with nine to 11 credits shall receive three-quarters of a full-time award. A student shall receive an additional semester of NJ STARS II eligibility for each semester the student receives an exemption from the full-time course of study requirement pursuant to this

subsection, not to exceed four additional semesters. Total NJ STARS II payments shall not exceed \$5,000 for a student.

4. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved January 16, 2018.