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SENATE BILL NO. 1527

Offered January 20, 2017

A BILL to amend and reenact § 23.1-638 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the Virginia Guaranteed Assistance Program; eligibility; renewal; amount of grants.

Patron—Saslaw

Referred to Committee on Education and Health

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 23.1-638 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 23.1-638. Eligibility; amount of grants; renewals.

A. As used in this section, "class level" means a student's academic standing as a freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior, as determined by the public institution of higher education at which such student is enrolled on the basis of the number of credit hours such student has completed.

B. Only students who (i) are accepted for full-time enrollment as dependent students at a public institution of higher education; (ii) are not receiving a Virginia Commonwealth Award; (iii) demonstrate financial need as determined by the Council according to the congressional methodology for determining financial need and eligibility for financial aid; and (iv) are either (a) Virginia students who graduated from a high school in the Commonwealth with a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.5 on a scale of 4.0 or its equivalent or (b) are dependent children of active duty military personnel residing outside the Commonwealth pursuant to military orders, claiming Virginia on their State of Legal Residence Certificate, and satisfying the domicile requirements for such active duty military personnel pursuant to §§ 23.1-502 and 23.1-504 and graduated from a high school within or outside the Commonwealth with a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.5 on a scale of 4.0 or its equivalent are eligible to receive such grants.

B. C. All grants shall be awarded for one award year and may be renewed annually for no more than three subsequent award years as follows: (i) no recipient shall receive a subsequent grant until he has satisfied the requirements to advance to the next class level; (ii) no recipient shall receive more than one year of support per class level for a maximum total of two years of support at an associate-degree-granting public institution of higher education or more than one year of support per class level for a maximum total of four years of support at a baccalaureate public institution of higher education; and (iii) no recipient shall receive more than a combined lifetime total of four years of support, if the recipient:

1. Maintains a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.0 on a scale of 4.0 or its equivalent;
2. Demonstrates continued financial need;
3. Makes satisfactory academic progress toward a degree, earning not less than the minimum number of hours of credit required for full-time standing in each academic period during enrollment at a public institution of higher education; and
4. Maintains continuous full-time enrollment for not less than two semesters or three quarters in each successive award year unless the Council grants the recipient an exception for cause.

D. Beginning with first-time students enrolled in the fall semester in 2018, public institutions of higher education may provide larger awards to students in a higher class level or to students who enroll in 15 or more credit hours per semester.

2. That the provisions of this act shall become effective beginning with the first-time entering freshman class of the fall 2018 academic year.

INTRODUCED

SB1527