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HOUSE BILL NO. 485

Offered January 12, 2022

Prefiled January 11, 2022

A *BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 1 of Chapter 6 of Title 23.1 a section numbered 23.1-611.2, relating to Student Emergency Aid Fund and Program; established.*

Patron—Helmer

Referred to Committee on Education

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Article 1 of Chapter 6 of Title 23.1 a section numbered 23.1-611.2 as follows:

§ 23.1-611.2. Student Emergency Aid Fund and Program.

A. There is hereby created in the state treasury a special nonreverting fund to be known as the State Emergency Aid Fund, referred to in this section as "the Fund." The Fund shall be established on the books of the Comptroller. All funds appropriated for such purpose and any gifts, donations, grants, bequests, and other funds received on its behalf shall be paid into the state treasury and credited to the Fund. Interest earned on moneys in the Fund shall remain in the Fund and be credited to it. Any moneys remaining in the Fund, including interest thereon, at the end of each fiscal year shall not revert to the general fund but shall remain in the Fund. Moneys in the Fund shall be used solely for the purposes of distributing emergency funds to students at public and nonprofit private institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth. Expenditures and disbursements from the Fund shall be made by the Council on warrants issued by the Comptroller upon written request signed by an authorized agent of the Council.

B. The Council shall establish the Student Emergency Aid Program (the Program) to distribute emergency funds to students enrolled as full-time or part-time students at public and nonprofit private institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth. Such funds shall be distributed to assist such students with satisfying non-tuition and non-book emergency financial transactions and costs required in order for the student to complete his certification or degree. Such financial transactions and costs to be covered may include (i) transportation to and from the institution; (ii) on-campus or off-campus housing, and other related costs; (iii) food; and (iv) any other costs determined by the Council, with input from participating institutions of higher education.

C. The Council shall administer the Program and establish guidelines for (i) what types of emergency financial transactions and costs are eligible to be covered through the Program, (ii) criteria students must satisfy to be eligible for the Program, (iii) any limits on money to be disbursed through the Fund per person or per type of situation. The Council shall distribute money to participating institutions and each institution shall create an application process whereby students applying for money from the Fund may easily apply and, if accepted, receive money to be distributed by the institution in a timely manner. Students who receive money from the Fund shall not be required to pay back any sum of the money received.

INTRODUCED

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