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HOUSE BILL NO. 1896**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE**(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Finance
on February 18, 2015)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Cox)

*A BILL to amend and reenact § 23-38.53:6 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the Virginia Guaranteed Assistance Program; grants.***Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:****1. That § 23-38.53:6 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 23-38.53:6. Eligible students; criteria for awarding grants; renewals.**

A. Only students who (i) are domiciled residents of Virginia as defined by § 23-7.4 and who are graduates of a high school in the Commonwealth with a cumulative secondary school grade point average of at least 2.5 on a scale of 4.0 or its equivalent, or (ii) are dependent children of active duty military personnel residing outside the Commonwealth pursuant to military orders and claiming Virginia on their State of Legal Residence Certificate and satisfying the domicile requirements for such active duty military personnel pursuant to subsection B of § 23-7.4, and who are graduates of a high school inside or outside the Commonwealth with a cumulative secondary school grade point average of at least 2.5 on a scale of 4.0 or its equivalent, and who (iii) are accepted for enrollment as dependent students in any public institution of higher education in Virginia, and (iv) are not receiving state discretionary aid and demonstrate financial need as defined by the State Council of Higher Education shall be eligible to receive such awards.

B. The amount of the Guaranteed Assistance Program grant awarded students shall be determined annually by the State Council of Higher Education. Eligibility for such awards shall be determined according to the Congressional methodology for determining financial need and eligibility for financial aid.

C. All grants shall be awarded for one year, but may be renewed annually for no more than three subsequent years of study if the recipient:

1. Maintains at least a 2.0 grade point average 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 in Virginia; and

4. Maintains continuous enrollment for not less than two semesters or three quarters in each successive academic year, unless granted an exception for cause by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.

D. 1. In lieu of the provisions of subsections B and C, an institution may, in its discretion, provide each eligible student with an award from the institution's appropriations for undergraduate student financial assistance, based on a combination of financial need and student class level as set forth in this subsection.

2. Beginning with first-time students enrolled in the fall semester of 2016, each eligible student shall receive an award in an amount greater than the award of each eligible student with equivalent remaining need in the next-lowest class level.

3. Each eligible student shall receive an award in an amount greater than other grants awarded to students with equivalent remaining need.

4. The amount of each award shall vary according to each student's remaining need and the total of tuition, fees, and other necessary charges, including books. The actual amount of each award shall be determined by the proportionate award schedule adopted by each institution.

5. Grants shall be awarded for one year, and students shall not receive subsequent awards until they have satisfied the requirements to move to the next class level. Each recipient may receive a maximum of one year of support per class level for a maximum total of four years of support at a four-year institution and a maximum total of two years of support at a two-year institution, provided that in no case shall a recipient receive more than a combined total of four years of support.

6. A student who has received a grant for one year shall only receive subsequent awards pursuant to subdivision 5 if the student (i) maintains at least a 2.0 grade point average on a scale of 4.0 or its equivalent, (ii) demonstrates continued financial need, (iii) makes satisfactory academic progress toward a degree, and (iv) maintains a continuous enrollment for not less than two semesters or three quarters in each successive academic year, unless granted an exception for cause by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.