

Existing law authorizes a rebate for donations a taxpayer makes to a school tuition organization (STO) which provides scholarships to qualified students to attend a qualified school. The amount of the rebate is equal to the actual amount of the taxpayer's donation used by an STO to fund a scholarship to a qualified student. Further provides relative to the requirement that an STO provide scholarships to qualified students on a first-come, first served basis with priority given to students who received a scholarship the previous year.

New law specifies, with respect to the priority given to students who received a scholarship the previous year, that the scholarship was from either the STO or the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program.

Existing law requires an STO to ensure that scholarships granted to qualified students are portable during the school year and can be used at any qualifying school that accepts a qualified student. Authorizes the scholarship amount to be prorated if a parent desires their student to move to a new qualified school during a school year.

New law specifies that the STO's obligation to ensure that the scholarship is portable and that tuition amount is prorated only applies to a qualifying school served by the STO.

Existing law defines a "qualified student" as a child who is a member of a family that resides in La. with a total household income that does not exceed an amount equal to 250% of the federal poverty level based on the federal poverty guidelines. A qualified student shall also be a student who is entering kindergarten for the first time, a student who attended a public school the previous year, or a student who received a scholarship from an STO for the previous school year.

New law adds to the definition of a "qualified student" to also include a student who received a scholarship from the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program.

Existing law requires the DOE to bar an STO from participating in the rebate program if the STO intentionally and substantially failed to comply with the requirements of existing law.

Prior law authorized the Department of Education (DOE) to conduct either a financial review or an audit of an STO as deemed necessary by the department.

New law requires the DOE to conduct an annual audit of an STO. Further requires the DOE to publicly report state test scores for each student receiving a scholarship from an STO in accordance with existing federal law and federal regulations. However, the DOE shall not include the name or any other identifying information of individual students.

Effective Aug. 1, 2014.

(Amends R.S. 47:6301(B)(1)(c)(iv) and (viii) and (3), and (C)(1)(e); Adds R.S. 47:6301(C)(1)(g))