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## DIGEST

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HB 1021 Original

2026 Regular Session

Egan

**Abstract:** Requires repayment of a Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) award under certain circumstances.

Present law provides for TOPS, a merit scholarship program for students attending certain postsecondary education institutions who meet specific academic criteria and other requirements. Provides that the administering agency for the program is the Bd. of Regents. Proposed law retains present law.

Proposed law, applicable to students who graduate from high school during or after the 2025-2026 school year, requires a student who initially qualifies for an Opportunity, Performance, Honors, or Excellence award to repay the award amount paid on his behalf to a postsecondary education institution during his first academic year of enrollment if his award is canceled for failure to meet present law requirements for maintaining eligibility, if he resigns from the institution, or if he fails to complete a baccalaureate degree by the end of the spring semester of his fifth academic year of enrollment. Provides that nothing in proposed law shall be construed to provide for payment of an award for more than eight semesters unless an extension is granted as authorized in present law.

Proposed law exempts a student from this repayment requirement if he enrolls at an institution under the supervision and management of the Bd. of Supervisors of Community and Technical Colleges and meets all of the following criteria:

- (1) He enrolls in an eligible program within 12 months of the last date of enrollment at the baccalaureate degree-granting institution. (Proposed law defines "eligible program" as a program that results in industry-based certifications, technical diplomas, certificates of applied science, or associate degrees that align with workforce demand as determined by the Bd. of Regents.)
- (2) He enrolls for at least six credit hours per semester or an equivalent number of "clock hours" (as defined in federal regulations), as determined by the board of supervisors, in a workforce training program.
- (3) He successfully completes the eligible program in no more than 36 months.

Proposed law requires the Bd. of Regents to promulgate rules for proposed law implementation that shall include, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) Provision for circumstances under which a student shall be exempt from the repayment requirement even he does not meet the proposed law exemption criteria.
- (2) Provision for circumstances under which a student may be required to repay a partial amount instead of the full award amount paid on his behalf for his first year of enrollment.
- (3) Provision for all available means of collecting amounts owed and interest on unpaid amounts.

Proposed law requires the Bd. of Regents to submit a written report to the House and Senate education committees by Dec. first annually that includes the number of Opportunity, Performance, Honors, or Excellence award recipients who do not complete a baccalaureate degree by the end of the spring semester of their fifth year of enrollment, the number of such students who then enroll in a community or technical college as provided in proposed law, the degrees or other credentials earned by such students, repayment outcomes, and any available workforce outcomes.

Present law requires the Bd. of Regents to submit a report by Dec. first annually on specified aspects of TOPS to the House and Senate education committees. Proposed law allows the board to incorporate the proposed law report into the present law report.

(Adds R.S. 17:5004)