
DIGEST

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HB 385 Engrossed

2026 Regular Session

Bamberg

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

Present law provides for the TOPS program of merit scholarships for students attending certain postsecondary education institutions who meet specific academic criteria and other requirements. Once enrolled in college, requires that students meet certain requirements in order to maintain continued eligibility. Such requirements include but are not limited to making steady academic progress while earning enough credits to maintain full-time status, maintaining a minimum required grade point average, and having no criminal conviction except for misdemeanor traffic violations.

Proposed law, applicable to students who graduate from high school during or after the 2025-2026 school year, requires a student to repay award amounts paid to a postsecondary education institution on his behalf if his award is suspended or canceled for failure to meet the requirements for maintaining eligibility. Exempts the following students from the repayment requirement:

- (1) A student who initially qualified for an Honors or Excellence award.
- (2) A student who enrolls during or immediately following the semester of the suspension or cancellation or at an institution under the supervision and management of the Bd. of Supervisors of Community and Technical Colleges in a high-wage, high-demand program determined to be a "qualified program" as provided in present law.

Proposed law requires the administering agency (Bd. of Regents) to promulgate rules necessary to implement proposed law, including provisions for the following:

- (1) Collecting amounts owed and interest on unpaid amounts.
- (2) Circumstances under which a student shall be excepted from proposed law repayment requirement in addition to those provided above; requires that these rules provide for the definition, certification requirements, and maximum duration of these circumstances, which shall be limited to the following exceptions:
 - (a) Parental leave.
 - (b) Physical rehabilitation program.

- (c) Substance abuse rehabilitation program.
- (d) Temporary disability.
- (e) Permanent disability.
- (f) Exceptional educational opportunity.
- (g) Religious commitment.
- (h) Death of immediate family.
- (i) Military service.
- (j) Transfer to a selective enrollment program.
- (k) Unavailability of courses.
- (l) Natural disaster.
- (m) Exceptional circumstances in addition to the proposed law exceptions.

(Adds R.S. 17:5004)

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Education to the original bill:

1. Exempt the following students from the repayment requirement:
 - (a) A student who initially qualified for an Honors or Excellence award.
 - (b) A student who enrolls during or immediately following the semester of the suspension or cancellation at an institution under the supervision and management of the Bd. of Supervisors of Community and Technical Colleges in certain high-wage, high-demand programs.