

2025 Regular Session

ACT No. 347

HOUSE BILL NO. 77

BY REPRESENTATIVES TURNER, ADAMS, BAGLEY, BERAULT, BUTLER, CARRIER, CHASSION, FREIBERG, HORTON, ILLG, KERNER, MACK, SCHLEGEL, AND THOMPSON AND SENATORS BARROW, BOUDREAUX, BOUIE, FOIL, HENRY, JACKSON-ANDREWS, JENKINS, MIGUEZ, MORRIS, MYERS, PRICE, REESE, AND SELTERS

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact R.S. 17:5002(A), (E)(1) and (3), and (G), 5024(B)(1),
3 5025(introductory paragraph), 5029(B)(3)(b)(ii) and (iii) and (D)(1)(introductory
4 paragraph), 5041(introductory paragraph), (1)(c), and (4), and 5043(1) and to enact
5 R.S. 17:5002(I) and 5024(A)(1)(e), relative to the Taylor Opportunity Program for
6 Students; to create a new program award level; to provide a definition of tuition for
7 certain program purposes; to provide for an additional test for purposes of
8 determining initial award eligibility; to provide for applicability; and to provide for
9 related matters.

10 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

11 Section 1. R.S. 17:5002(A), (E)(1) and (3), and (G), 5024(B)(1), 5025(introductory
12 paragraph), 5029(B)(3)(b)(ii) and (iii) and (D)(1)(introductory paragraph), 5041(introductory
13 paragraph), (1)(c), and (4), and 5043(1) are hereby amended and reenacted and R.S.
14 17:5002(I) and 5024(A)(1)(e) are hereby enacted to read as follows:

15 §5002. Awards and amounts

16 A.~~(1)~~ A student shall be eligible for an Opportunity, Performance, Honors,
17 Excellence, or TOPS-Tech Award based on his academic achievement.

18 ~~(2) The award amount shall be as provided in Subsection B or D of this~~
19 ~~Section unless the legislature, by law, increases the award amount.~~

20 * * *

1 E.(1) No student shall be eligible for tuition payment pursuant to this Section
2 for the Opportunity Award, the Performance Award, ~~or~~ the Honors Award, or the
3 Excellence Award for more than eight semesters or an equivalent number of units
4 in an eligible institution which operates on a schedule based on units other than
5 semesters, unless an extension is granted by the administering agency in accordance
6 with its rules.

7 * * *

8 (3)(a) Any student receiving an Opportunity, Performance, ~~or~~ Honors, or
9 Excellence Award who successfully completes an academic undergraduate degree
10 in less than the eight semesters or its equivalent of award benefits provided by this
11 Subsection shall be eligible to continue to receive all applicable award benefits, in
12 accordance with the limitations as specified in Subparagraph (b) of this Paragraph,
13 for any remaining semester or semesters or the equivalent thereof of eligibility not
14 used to obtain the undergraduate degree if the student pursues a postgraduate
15 academic degree at an eligible institution and the student continues to meet all
16 academic and other requirements provided by this Section and by rule of the
17 administering agency for continued receipt of the award as an undergraduate except
18 as such requirements, including requirements provided by this Section for
19 undergraduate students, may be modified by the administering agency as necessary
20 to apply such requirements to postgraduate study.

21 (b) In developing rules to implement this Paragraph, the administering
22 agency shall establish reasonable time lines and deadlines for receipt of any
23 information required to implement this Paragraph both for current and subsequent
24 students receiving Opportunity, Performance, ~~or~~ Honors, or Excellence awards and
25 for any student previously receiving such an award who successfully completed an
26 academic undergraduate degree in less than eight semesters. Such rules shall also
27 provide for appropriate notice to all such students of the time lines, deadlines, and
28 rules governing implementation of this Paragraph.

29 (c) The amount of the award benefits as provided for in Subparagraph (a) of
30 this Paragraph shall not exceed the amounts determined by the administering agency

1 to equal the tuition charged for the postgraduate study or for undergraduate full-time
2 enrollment charged by the highest cost public college or university in the state,
3 whichever amount is less.

4 * * *

5 G. In lieu of the payment of tuition as provided in this Section, any student
6 participating in the program provided by R.S. 29:36.1 for persons serving in the
7 Louisiana National Guard shall receive the tuition exemption as provided therein.
8 In addition to any other payments provided for by R.S. 29:36.1:

9 (1) For any student who also meets the qualifications provided in this
10 ~~Section~~ Chapter for receipt of an Opportunity Award or a TOPS-Tech Award, the
11 state shall pay on behalf of such student a sum of three hundred dollars per semester
12 or six hundred dollars per academic year to be applied toward the cost of books and
13 other instructional materials.

14 (2) For any student who also meets the qualifications provided in this
15 ~~Section~~ Chapter for receipt of a Performance Award, the state shall pay on behalf of
16 the student a sum of three hundred dollars per semester or six hundred dollars per
17 academic year to be applied toward the cost of books and other instructional
18 materials plus the sum of four hundred dollars per semester or eight hundred dollars
19 per academic year for other educational expenses as defined by the administering
20 agency.

21 (3) For any student who also meets the qualifications provided in this
22 ~~Section~~ Chapter for receipt of an Honors Award, the state shall pay on behalf of the
23 student a sum of three hundred dollars per semester or six hundred dollars per
24 academic year to be applied toward the cost of books and other instructional
25 materials plus the sum of eight hundred dollars per semester or one thousand six
26 hundred dollars per academic year for other educational expenses as defined by the
27 administering agency.

28 (4) For any student who also meets the qualifications provided in this
29 Chapter for receipt of an Excellence Award, the state shall pay on behalf of the
30 student a sum of three hundred dollars per semester or six hundred dollars per

1 academic year to be applied toward the cost of books and other instructional
2 materials plus the sum of one thousand dollars per semester or two thousand dollars
3 per academic year for other educational expenses as defined by the administering
4 agency.

5 * * *

6 I.(1) Any student who is eligible for an Excellence Award pursuant to this
7 Chapter and who has enrolled in any public college or university in this state, shall
8 be awarded by the state either an amount determined by the administering agency to
9 equal the tuition charged by the public college or university or twelve thousand
10 dollars, whichever is less.

11 (2) Any student who is eligible for an Excellence Award pursuant to this
12 Chapter and who has enrolled in any independent college or university in this state
13 that is a member of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and
14 Universities and that is accredited by an institutional accrediting agency recognized
15 by the United States Department of Education to pursue an academic degree, shall
16 be awarded by the state either an amount determined by the administering agency
17 equal to the tuition charged by the independent college or university or eight
18 thousand five hundred dollars, whichever is less.

19 (3) For purposes of this Subsection, "tuition" means the annual resident
20 tuition and fees charged by the institution as reported in the Board of Regents annual
21 mandatory tuition and fees survey.

22 * * *

23 §5024. Academic requirements

24 A.(1) Except as otherwise provided by this Subsection, students shall meet
25 the following minimum grade point average requirements, calculated on a 4.00 scale
26 using only the grades obtained by the student in completing the core curriculum
27 requirements established by this Chapter, for the respective awards:

28 * * *

29 (e) For an Excellence Award, a minimum cumulative grade point average
30 of 3.50.

* * *

B.(1) Except as otherwise provided by this Subsection, a student shall earn the following minimum test scores for the respective awards:

(a) For an Opportunity Award, a composite score on the 1990 version of the ACT which is at least equal to or higher than the state's average composite score, truncated to a whole number, reported for the prior year but never less than twenty or an equivalent concordant value on an enhanced or revised version of such test, or on the SAT, or the Classic Learning Test.

(b) For a Performance Award, a composite score on the 1990 version of the ACT of twenty-three or higher or an equivalent concordant value on any enhanced or revised version of such test, ~~or on the SAT, or the Classic Learning Test.~~

(c) For an Honors Award, a score of twenty-seven or higher on the 1990 version of the ACT or an equivalent concordant value on any enhanced or revised version of such test, ~~or on the SAT, or the Classic Learning Test.~~

(d) For a TOPS-Tech Award, a composite score on the specified ACT of seventeen or higher or an equivalent concordant value on any enhanced or revised version of such test, ~~or on the SAT, or the Classic Learning Test.~~ The student may, as an alternative requirement, have attained a silver level score on the assessments of the ACT WorkKeys system.

(e) For an Excellence Award, a score of thirty-one or higher on the 1990 version of the ACT or an equivalent concordant value on any enhanced or revised version of such test, the SAT, or the Classic Learning Test.

* * *

§5025. High school core curriculum requirements; Opportunity, Performance, Honors, Excellence Awards

To be eligible for an Opportunity, Performance, ~~or Honors, or Excellence~~ Award pursuant to this Chapter, a student shall have successfully completed a core curriculum which consists of twenty units of high school course work as follows:

* * *

§5029. Alternative initial eligibility requirements

* * *

B. A student who completes a home study program shall be eligible to receive an award pursuant to this Chapter if each of the following conditions is met:

* * *

(3)

* * *

(b)

* * *

(ii) For a student qualifying for an initial TOPS-Tech or Opportunity Award for the 2008-2009 award year or thereafter pursuant to this Subsection, the student shall have a composite score on the 1990 version of the ACT which is at least two points higher than that required by R.S. 17:5024(B) for the particular award or an equivalent concordant value on an enhanced or revised version of such test, ~~or on the SAT,~~ or the Classic Learning Test.

(iii) For a student qualifying for an initial Performance, ~~or Honors,~~ or Excellence Award for the 2008-2009 award year or thereafter pursuant to this Subsection, the student shall have a composite score on the 1990 version of the ACT which is at least one point higher than that required by R.S. 17:5024(B) for the particular award or an equivalent concordant value on an enhanced or revised version of such test, ~~or on the SAT,~~ or the Classic Learning Test.

* * *

D.(1) Beginning with the 2004-2005 award year, a student who does not graduate from high school or complete a home study program shall be eligible to receive an Opportunity, Performance, or Honors Award pursuant to this Chapter and a student who does not graduate from high school or complete a home study program shall be eligible to receive an Excellence Award pursuant to this Chapter if each of the following conditions is met:

* * *

§5041. Maintaining eligibility; Excellence, Honors, Performance, Opportunity

To maintain continued state payment of any amount pursuant to an Opportunity, Performance, ~~or~~ Honors, or Excellence Award once enrolled in college a student shall meet all of the following:

(1)

* * *

(c) If at any time a student fails to maintain the cumulative grade point average required for continuation in the program or, as of the end of any semester or term during the academic year, fails to make steady academic progress as defined by the administering agency, such student shall become ineligible for further payments. Payments limited to those provided in R.S. 17:5002(B), regardless of whether the originally granted award was an Opportunity, Performance, ~~or~~ Honors, or Excellence Award, may be reinstated upon attainment of the grade point average required by this Section for a student to maintain continued state payments once enrolled in college and the standards for steady academic progress as defined by the administering agency, provided that the student has maintained other continuation requirements and the period of ineligibility did not persist for more than two years from the date of loss of eligibility. If this two-year period is interrupted due to a student's active duty service in the United States Armed Forces, the two-year period shall be extended for a length of time equal to the student's active duty service, not to exceed four years, unless the student reenlists in the United States Armed Forces and maintains continuous active duty, in which case the period shall be extended for a length of time equal to the student's active duty service; or unless the student is granted an exception for cause by the administering agency.

* * *

(4)(a) For students qualifying to receive a Performance, ~~or an~~ Honors, or Excellence Award, have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.00 on a 4.00 scale at the end of each academic year.

(b) However, if at any time an otherwise eligible student receiving a Performance, ~~Award or an~~ Honors, or Excellence Award in accordance with the provisions of this Chapter fails to have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.00 on a 4.00 scale at the end of any academic year but has and continues to maintain a cumulative grade point average at least equal to that required by Paragraph (3) of this Subsection for continued participation by a recipient of an Opportunity Award, the student receiving a Performance, ~~Award or an~~ Honors, or Excellence Award shall remain eligible for state payments but only in the amount provided for in R.S. 17:5002(B) for a recipient of an Opportunity Award. The provisions of this Subparagraph shall apply to all students who receive state payments pursuant to a Performance, ~~Award or an~~ Honors, or Excellence Award, including all such students from the beginning of the program.

* * *

§5043. Returning students

Notwithstanding any provision of this Chapter to the contrary, any otherwise qualified student who meets each of the following conditions and who enrolls as a first-time freshman in an out-of-state college or university, or beginning with the 2009-2010 academic year, first enrolls as a first-time freshman in an eligible college or university in Louisiana and subsequently enrolls in an out-of-state college or university, may use the program award provided for by this Section at an eligible college or university in Louisiana in accordance with this Section and other applicable provisions of this Chapter; however, the time period of award eligibility set forth in R.S. 17:5002(E) shall be reduced by an equivalent number of units as may be applicable for each semester or equivalent time period that the student is enrolled in an out-of-state college or university:

(1) The student has been determined by the administering agency to meet the initial eligibility requirements established by this Section for an Opportunity, Performance, ~~or~~ Honors, or Excellence Award.

* * *

1 Section 2.(A) Qualification for an Excellence Award and qualification for a
2 program award based on scores attained on the Classic Learning Test, both as provided in
3 Section 1 of this Act, shall apply to students graduating from high school during or after the
4 2024-2025 school year.

5 (B) Notwithstanding the provisions of R.S. 17:5025 as amended and reenacted by
6 this Act, the core curriculum requirements for a student qualifying for an Excellence Award
7 shall be the same as those requirements provided in R.S. 17:5025.1 et seq. that apply to
8 students qualifying for an Opportunity, Performance, or Honors Award according to the year
9 such student graduates from high school.

10 Section 3. If House Bill No. 378 of this 2025 Regular Session of the Legislature
11 becomes law, the provisions of R.S. 17:5029(B)(3)(b)(ii) and (iii) as amended and reenacted
12 in the Act that originated as House Bill No. 378 of this 2025 Regular Session of the
13 Legislature shall supersede and control regardless of the order of passage, and the provisions
14 of R.S. 17:5029(B)(3)(b)(ii) and (iii) as amended and reenacted in Section 1 of this Act shall
15 not become law.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

APPROVED: _____