

2015 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 739

BY REPRESENTATIVE JAMES

Prefiled pursuant to Article III, Section 2(A)(4)(b)(i) of the Constitution of Louisiana.

HIGHER EDUCATION: Establishes the Louisiana Education and Workforce Opportunity Program and Fund

1 AN ACT

2 To enact Chapter 20-I of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be comprised
3 of R.S. 17:3050.5 through 3050.10, relative to higher education assistance; to
4 establish the Louisiana Education and Workforce Opportunity Grant Program; to
5 establish the Education and Workforce Opportunity Grant Council and provide for
6 members; to establish the Louisiana Education and Workforce Opportunity Fund and
7 funding source; to provide for administration of the program; to provide for rule
8 promulgating authority; to provide an effective date; and to provide for related
9 matters.

10 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

11 Section 1. Chapter 20-I of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be
12 comprised of R.S. 17:3050.5 through 3050.10, is hereby enacted to read as follows:

13 CHAPTER 20-I. LOUISIANA EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE

14 OPPORTUNITY GRANT PROGRAM

15 §3050.5. Louisiana Education and Workforce Opportunity Grant Program;
16 legislative findings

17 The legislature finds that sustained investment in human capital is necessary
18 to create high-paying jobs, meet labor demand, and improve the well-being of the
19 citizens of Louisiana. The legislature also finds that Louisiana's current suite of
20 financial aid programs for post-secondary education has not adequately served

1 students with a demonstrated financial need and non-traditional students, and the
2 legislature notes that existing grant programs often cannot cover enough of a
3 student's demonstrated financial need to encourage retention and program
4 completion. In order to promote access to higher education among students most in
5 need, the legislature finds that additional sources of aid are required in order to
6 address demonstrated financial need. At the same time, the legislature finds that any
7 new source of aid must be carefully structured in line with national best practices to
8 encourage increased usage among families with a demonstrated financial need,
9 student retention, acquisition of high-demand skills, and steady progress toward
10 securing meaningful, well-compensated career options. In summary, the legislature
11 finds that the Education and Workforce Opportunity Grant, as fully developed by
12 agency rule, will provide a valuable tool for building a skilled workforce, promoting
13 access to higher education, and alleviating poverty in the State of Louisiana.

14 §3050.6. Creation of the Education and Workforce Opportunity Grant Council

15 The Education and Workforce Opportunity Grant Council, referred to
16 hereinafter as the "council", is hereby established as an independent subcommittee
17 of the Board of Regents and shall be composed of the following members:

18 (1) The commissioner of higher education, or his designee.

19 (2) The executive director of the Louisiana Workforce Commission, or his
20 designee.

21 (3) The secretary of the Department of Economic Development, or his
22 designee.

23 §3050.7. Eligibility

24 The Board of Regents shall provide for the participation of any student who
25 meets the following requirements:

26 (1) Is a Louisiana resident at the time of application.

27 (2) Has earned a high school diploma or GED.

28 (3) Meets the admission requirements and is enrolled in a Louisiana public
29 college or university, a regionally accredited independent college or university in the

1 state that is a member of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and
2 Universities, or an approved industry-based training program, hereinafter referred
3 to in this Chapter collectively as "eligible colleges and universities", to pursue either
4 an academic undergraduate degree, certification, skill, or occupational training from
5 a postsecondary institution, an industry-based training or certification as approved
6 by the council.

7 (4) Has submitted a Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

8 (5) Meets the income eligibility requirements of the federal Pell Grant
9 program.

10 (6) Is determined to have unmet needs with regards to the ability to pay the
11 cost of attendance for the eligible college or university in which the student is
12 enrolled.

13 (7) Maintains steady academic progress, as defined by the Board of Regents,
14 for continued participation.

15 (8) Meets any other eligibility criteria the Board of Regents may require.

16 §3050.8. Administration; rulemaking authority

17 A. The council shall establish the criteria for initial and continuing
18 eligibility, the method for determining the award amount, the eligible degree and
19 non-degree certificate programs, and other program requirements not otherwise
20 provided for in this Chapter.

21 B. The Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission, through the
22 office of student financial assistance, shall administer the program and shall adopt
23 rules necessary to implement the provisions of this Chapter in accordance with the
24 Administrative Procedure Act.

25 §3050.9. Phase-In and Program Cap

26 A. The total amount of education opportunity grants will be phased in, up to
27 an annual program cap of twenty-five million dollars, as follows:

28 (1) In Fiscal Year 2016-2017, the annual program cap shall be two million
29 dollars.

1 (2) In Fiscal Year 2017-2018, the annual program cap shall be eight million
2 dollars.

3 (3) In Fiscal Year 2018-2019, the annual program cap shall be eighteen
4 million dollars.

5 (4) In Fiscal Year 2019-2020, the annual program cap shall be twenty-two
6 million dollars.

7 (5) In Fiscal Year 2020-2021, the annual program cap shall be twenty-five
8 million dollars.

9 B. The total amount of education opportunity grants available in any fiscal
10 year shall not exceed twenty-five million dollars. The Louisiana Student Financial
11 Assistance Commission, through the office of student financial assistance, shall by
12 rule establish the method of allocating available grants to institutions and students
13 in a method which, in its discretion, is most beneficial to the students and the state.

14 §3050.10. Louisiana Education and Workforce Opportunities Fund

15 A. There is hereby created in the state treasury, as a special fund, the
16 Louisiana Education and Workforce Opportunities Fund, hereinafter referred to as
17 the "fund".

18 B.(1) The source of monies in the fund shall be as follows:

19 (a) Monies transferred to the fund pursuant to the provisions of R.S.
20 51:1787(K).

21 (b) Monies designated for the fund and received by the state treasurer from
22 donations, gifts, grants, appropriations, or other revenue.

23 (2) Monies in the fund shall be invested in the same manner as monies in the
24 state general fund. Interest earned on investment of monies in the fund shall be
25 credited to this fund. Unexpended and unencumbered monies in the fund at the end
26 of the fiscal year shall remain in the fund.

27 C. Monies in the Louisiana Education and Workforce Opportunities Fund
28 shall be appropriated annually to the office of student financial assistance for use
29 solely to fund the Louisiana Education Opportunities and Workforce Grant Program

Effective upon passage of (HLS 726)

(Adds R.S. 17:3050.5-3050.10)