

CHAPTER 55

AN ACT concerning eligibility for the New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarship (NJ STARS) Program, amending and supplementing P.L.2004, c.59, and amending P.L.2009, c.280.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. Section 5 of P.L.2004, c.59 (C.18A:71B-85) is amended to read as follows:

C.18A:71B-85 NJ STARS scholarships; eligibility.

5. a. A scholarship under the NJ STARS Program shall cover the full cost of tuition, subject to the prior application of other grants and scholarships against those costs as provided under paragraph (2) of subsection c. of this section, for up to 18 credit hours in any semester, for an eligible student enrolled in a full-time course of study at the New Jersey county college serving the student's county of residence. An otherwise eligible student who demonstrates to the authority, in accordance with such criteria and by means of such documentation as the authority shall establish by regulation, that the county college serving the student's county of residence does not offer the curriculum that the student chooses to study shall be eligible for such scholarship at another New Jersey county college offering that curriculum. The amount of any scholarship allowed hereunder to a student at a county college serving a county other than the student's county of residence shall be computed as though the student were a resident of the county served by that college, and the college shall likewise compute the amount of any additional payment, required with respect to the enrollment of that student for credit hours of study during a semester in which the scholarship is awarded that are not covered by that scholarship, as though the student were a resident of the county.

b. A student shall be eligible for a scholarship under the NJ STARS Program for up to five semesters, including summer sessions. The scholarship shall be payable for the first year of enrollment in a county college to a student who:

(1) has graduated high school and, in the case of a student who graduates in the 2013-2014 school year and thereafter, whose class rank at the completion of the 11th grade or 12th grade was in the top 15.0% of the student's high school class, provided that in the case of students graduating from high schools that do not calculate the class rank of their students, the student's ranking at the completion of the 11th grade or 12th grade shall be determined by the high school in consultation with the authority; and

(2) completed a rigorous high school course of study in accordance with standards established by the Secretary of Higher Education in consultation with the Commissioner of Education.

During a student's enrollment in a county college after the first year of enrollment, the scholarship shall be payable to that student if the student attains a grade point average of at least 3.0 by the start of the student's second year of county college enrollment. A student who attains a grade point average of less than 3.0 at the start of the second semester of the student's first year of county college enrollment shall participate in an enrichment program designed by the county college during the second semester of the student's first year of enrollment.

c. To be eligible to receive a scholarship under the NJ STARS Program a student shall:

(1) be a State resident pursuant to guidelines established by the authority. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 1 of P.L.1979, c.361 (C.18A:62-4) or any other section of law to the contrary, a dependent child of a parent or guardian who has been

transferred to a military installation located in this State shall be considered a resident of this State for the purposes of qualifying for an NJ STARS scholarship;

(2) have applied for all other available forms of State and federal need-based grants and merit scholarships, exclusive of loans, the full amount of which grants and scholarships shall be applied to tuition to reduce the amount of any scholarship that the student shall receive under the provisions of this act;

(3) except as otherwise provided pursuant to subsection a. of section 3 of P.L.2008, c.124 (C.18A:71B-85.2), be enrolled in a full-time course of study at a New Jersey county college;

(4) have graduated from high school in 2004 or later, and not earlier than the calendar year two years prior to the first calendar year in which a scholarship payment is to be made; and

(5) except as otherwise provided pursuant to subsection a. of section 3 of P.L.2008, c.124 (C.18A:71B-85.2), maintain continuous enrollment in a full-time course of study, unless on medical leave due to the illness of the student or a member of the student's immediate family or emergency leave because of a family emergency, which medical or emergency leave shall have been approved by the county college, or unless called to partial or full mobilization for State or federal active duty as a member of the National Guard or a Reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States.

d. A student who is dismissed for academic or disciplinary reasons from a county college shall no longer be eligible for a scholarship under this act. If a student participating in the program is dismissed for disciplinary reasons, the student shall repay in full all amounts received under the program. The county college shall be responsible for collecting the repayment, or the amount of any overpayment or other improper payment, of any State awards under the program, in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.18A:71B-10.

e. A student scholarship under the NJ STARS Program may be renewed upon the student's filing of a renewal financial aid application and providing evidence that the student has satisfied the requirements pursuant to subsection b. of this section.

2. Section 1 of P.L.2009, c.280 (C.18A:71B-85.5) is amended to read as follows:

C.18A:71B-85.5 Provision of information to students relative to eligibility for NJ STARS.

1. a. In September of each school year, the board of education of a school district or the chief school administrator of a nonpublic school shall provide each student in the 9th grade with general information on the New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarship (NJ STARS) Program created pursuant to P.L.2004, c.59 (C.18A:71B-81 et seq.).

b. In September of each school year, the board of education of a school district or the chief school administrator of a nonpublic school shall notify each student in the 11th grade who is ranked in the top 25.0% of the class of his potential to qualify for the NJ STARS Program if the student's class rank at the completion of the 11th grade or 12th grade is within the top 15.0% of the class.

The notification shall include information about the rigorous course of study required to qualify for the program.

A student in the 12th grade shall be notified of conditional eligibility for the NJ STARS Program by the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority in accordance with the provisions of section 2 of P.L.2008, c.124 (C.18A:71B-85.1).

c. The notification by the board of education or chief school administrator required pursuant to subsections a. and b. of this section shall be communicated via regular or

electronic mail or sent home with the student and include a brief description of the NJ STARS Program and the requirements for eligibility for the program.

C.18A:71B-85.5a Requirements for scholarship.

3. In the event that a student was notified of eligibility for a scholarship under the NJ STARS Program for the first year of enrollment in a county college in the 2013-2014 academic year based on the student's class rank at the completion of the 11th grade, the student shall be eligible for the scholarship in that academic year if the student meets the requirements of subsection c. of section 5 of P.L.2004, c.59 (C.18A:71B-85). The student shall be eligible for an NJ STARS scholarship after the first year of county college enrollment if the student attains a grade point average of at least 3.0 by the start of the student's second year of county college enrollment and if the student meets the requirements of subsection c. of section 5 of P.L.2004, c.59 (C.18A:71B-85).

4. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved September 10, 2014.