

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 199

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED OCTOBER 26, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman VALERIE VAINIERI HUTTLE

District 37 (Bergen)

Assemblyman GORDON M. JOHNSON

District 37 (Bergen)

Assemblyman ROBERT J. KARABINCHAK

District 18 (Middlesex)

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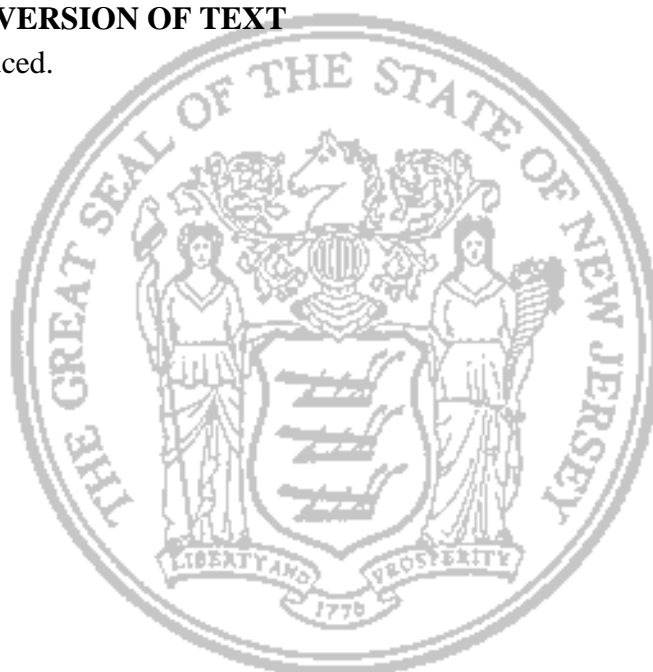
Assemblywoman Carter

SYNOPSIS

Urges Congress to address in future federal higher education stimulus legislation inequities in incorporation of part-time and online learning students in formula calculation.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 1/13/2021)

AR199 VAINIERI HUTTLE, JOHNSON

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1 AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION respectfully urging the Congress of the
2 United States to address certain inequities in future federal
3 higher education stimulus aid.
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5 WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound health and
6 socioeconomic impacts on many industries and nearly all facets of
7 society, including higher education; and
8 WHEREAS, The outbreak of COVID-19 has forced colleges and
9 universities across the country to grapple with a host of unexpected
10 costs related to the shift to online instruction, campus-wide
11 sanitization efforts, and the maintenance of many other campus
12 operations, all in the face of declining revenues; and
13 WHEREAS, The pandemic has concurrently caused a major disruption
14 to the livelihoods of students as they were suddenly switched to
15 online learning, experienced losses or delays in job opportunities
16 and internships, and lost access to a host of important resources and
17 services generally provided on-campus; and
18 WHEREAS, Under the federal “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic
19 Security Act” (CARES Act), the Higher Education Emergency
20 Relief Fund (HEERF) was established to provide more than \$14
21 billion in aid to institutions of higher education; and
22 WHEREAS, Of the total \$14 billion allocated to the HEERF, over \$12
23 billion, half of which is required to go directly to students as
24 emergency financial aid grants, is to be distributed to institutions
25 using a formula based on an institution’s full-time equivalent (FTE)
26 enrollment of federal Pell Grant recipients and FTE enrollment of
27 non-Pell Grant recipients; and
28 WHEREAS, In calculating the aid amounts to be distributed to each
29 institution, the formula laid out in the CARES Act excludes
30 students exclusively enrolled in distance education courses; and
31 WHEREAS, Guidance issued by the federal Department of Education
32 also states that students who were enrolled exclusively in online
33 programs prior to the COVID-19 pandemic are not eligible for
34 student emergency financial aid grants issued by institutions using
35 funds from the HEERF; and
36 WHEREAS, These policies adversely affect institutions that enroll a
37 high number of part-time and online learning students and
38 perpetuate the failure to offer meaningful support to these students,
39 many of whom are employed and supporting families as they work
40 toward degree completion; and
41 WHEREAS, A large portion of the students most acutely affected by
42 these exclusions are working adult learners who have had to
43 address interruption of their studies, economic hardship, and
44 personal risk, to serve others; and
45 WHEREAS, In addition, a significant number of these students are low-
46 income, individuals of color, from rural areas, or first-generation
47 college students, groups which have been disproportionately
48 affected by the current economic crisis; and

1 **WHEREAS**, In basing aid on FTE enrollment, the formula provided in
2 the CARES Act has the effect of prioritizing institutions that have
3 greater percentages of full-time students and does not offer equal
4 treatment to those institutions that have higher part-time
5 enrollment; and

6 **WHEREAS**, These policies further affect institutions that have designed
7 their learning models to allow working adults the flexibility and
8 affordability necessary to achieve their academic goals and pursue
9 their college degrees; and

10 **WHEREAS**, Future federal legislation containing formulaic economic
11 recovery aid for higher education should better account for part-
12 time students in its calculations and address current disparities in
13 federal funding between institutions that have greater full-time
14 enrollment and those that enroll more part-time students; and

15 **WHEREAS**, To prevent the unequal treatment of online students in
16 higher education economic recovery aid, future federal stimulus
17 packages should ensure the provision of emergency financial aid
18 grants to online students and incorporate those students into
19 formulaic aid calculations; now, therefore,

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21 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the General Assembly of the State of New*
22 *Jersey:*

23

24 1. This House respectfully urges the United States Congress to
25 address in future federal stimulus legislation:

26 a. inequities in the incorporation and treatment of part-time and
27 online learning students, as currently evidenced in the formula used
28 to calculate distributions from the Higher Education Emergency
29 Relief Fund under the “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic
30 Security Act”;

31 b. current disparities in federal funding between institutions that
32 have greater full-time enrollment and those that enroll more part-
33 time students by counting part-time students and full-time students
34 in an equal manner; and

35 c. the provision of emergency financial aid grants to online
36 students and not exclude those students in formulaic aid
37 calculations.

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39 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
40 shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly to the
41 Majority and Minority Leaders of the United States Senate, to the
42 Speaker and Minority Leader of the United States House of
43 Representatives, and to each member of the United States Congress
44 elected from this State.

STATEMENT

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The outbreak of COVID-19 has forced colleges and universities across the country to grapple with a host of unexpected costs in the face of declining revenues, and has concurrently caused a major disruption to the livelihoods of students.

To help address the negative effects experienced by college students and institutions of higher education, the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) was established in the federal “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act” (CARES Act), to provide more than \$14 billion in aid. Of the total \$14 billion, over \$12 billion, half of which is required to go directly to students as emergency financial aid grants, is to be distributed to institutions using a formula based on an institution’s full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment of federal Pell Grant recipients and FTE enrollment of non-Pell Grant recipients. In calculating the aid amounts to be distributed to each institution, the formula laid out in the CARES Act excludes students exclusively enrolled in distance education courses. Guidance issued by the federal Department of Education states that students who were enrolled exclusively in online programs prior to the COVID-19 pandemic are not eligible for student emergency financial aid grants.

These policies adversely affect institutions that enroll a high number of part-time and online learning students. The policies also serve to be detrimental to these students, a significant portion of whom are low-income, individuals of color, from rural areas, or first-generation college students, groups that have been disproportionately affected by the current economic crisis.

In basing aid on FTE enrollment, the formula provided in the CARES Act has the effect of prioritizing institutions that have greater percentages of full-time students and does not offer equal treatment to those institutions that have higher part-time enrollment. By discounting online learning students from the formula calculation of higher education aid and not allowing them to receive emergency financial aid grants, the CARES Act explicitly disadvantages working adult learners and some of the most vulnerable college students.

This resolution urges Congress to address the current disparities in federal funding seen between institutions that have greater full-time enrollment and those that enroll more part-time students by counting part-time students and full-time students in an equal manner. It also urges that future federal stimulus legislation ensure the provision of emergency financial aid grants to online students and not exclude those students in formula aid calculations.