

# STATE OF NEW YORK

4781

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

## IN SENATE

February 12, 2025

Introduced by Sens. SKOUFIS, RIVERA, SANDERS -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Higher Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to enacting "Tuition-Free NY"

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as "Tuition-Free  
2 NY".

3 § 2. Paragraph h of subdivision 2 of section 355 of the education law  
4 is amended by adding a new subparagraph 1-a to read as follows:

5 (1-a) The trustees shall implement a program to permit any student who  
6 has been admitted to a state-operated institution of the state universi-  
7 ty to attend without the payment of tuition and fees if such student  
8 fulfills the requirements of such program pursuant to the provisions of  
9 this subparagraph. The provisions of this subparagraph shall only apply  
10 to costs of one undergraduate degree and any additional costs associated  
11 with more than one simultaneous undergraduate degree shall not be  
12 covered by this program.

13 (i) The trustees shall provide an application process and administer  
14 the program according to the following criteria:

15 (A) Any student eligible for resident tuition rates is eligible for  
16 this program.

17 (B) A student shall be required to sign a contract agreeing to reside  
18 in New York state for a period of five years subsequent to completion of  
19 their academic program.

20 (C) Students shall be required to complete their degree program within  
21 a minimum period of time to be set by the trustees which shall be no  
22 less than three years and no more than five years.

23 (D) A student who benefited from the program outlined in this subpara-  
24 graph shall be allowed to attend an out-of-state graduate school without

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets  
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 any penalty if such student pursues a graduate degree. Once such student  
2 concludes their graduate school studies, such student shall return to  
3 New York within one year for residency, per the program's requirements,  
4 or else the undergraduate benefit will turn into a student loan pursuant  
5 to the provisions of clause (ii) of this subparagraph.

6 (E) A student who benefited from the program outlined in this subpara-  
7 graph who is on active duty in the armed forces of the United States  
8 shall not be penalized if such student maintains their legal residence  
9 in the state of New York, during such service. "Legal residence" as used  
10 in this subclause shall mean the place where a member of the military  
11 intends to return and live after discharge or retirement, and which they  
12 consider their permanent home. Legal residency shall be determined by  
13 what local and state tax laws a member of the military is subject to,  
14 and in which state they may vote.

15 (ii) If a student or former student fails to fulfill any of the  
16 requirements set forth in clause (i) of this subparagraph, the trustees  
17 shall convert to a student loan the full amount of the tuition which  
18 would have been paid by such student, as determined by the New York  
19 state higher education services corporation, plus interest, according to  
20 a schedule to be determined by such corporation. Such repayment may  
21 also be required if a recipient fails to respond to requests for infor-  
22 mation necessary to determine continued eligibility or for adminis-  
23 tration of the program. The terms and conditions of this clause shall  
24 be deferred for students who enroll on at least a half-time basis in an  
25 approved undergraduate, graduate or higher degree program or other  
26 professional licensure degree program until they are conferred a degree,  
27 and shall also be deferred for any interruption in undergraduate study  
28 as established by the rules and regulations of the corporation. The  
29 terms and conditions of this clause may also be deferred for a grace  
30 period, to be established by the corporation, following the completion  
31 of an approved undergraduate program or a graduate or higher degree  
32 program or other professional licensure degree program. Notwithstanding  
33 any provisions of this clause to the contrary, the corporation is  
34 authorized to promulgate rules and regulations to provide for the waiver  
35 or suspension of any financial obligation which would involve extreme  
36 hardship.

37 (iii) Any student who elects to participate in the program under this  
38 subparagraph shall be required to apply for tuition assistance program  
39 funding. Funds awarded on the tuition assistance program shall be  
40 applied towards the cost of tuition prior to an award under this subpar-  
41 agraph.

42 (iv) Students shall be responsible for all other costs including hous-  
43 ing, fees and other non-tuition related charges.

44 (v) (A) This program shall not apply in academic years commencing on  
45 or before the effective date of this subparagraph. (B) For the first two  
46 years after the effective date of this subparagraph, this program shall  
47 only apply to students attending community colleges as defined by subdi-  
48 vision two of section sixty-three hundred one of this chapter. (C) In  
49 all other years, this program shall apply to all students attending  
50 SUNY, CUNY, and community colleges of the state.

51 § 3. Subdivision 7 of section 6206 of the education law is amended by  
52 adding a new paragraph (g) to read as follows:

53 (g) The trustees shall implement a program to permit any student who  
54 has been admitted to an institution operated by the city university to  
55 attend without the payment of tuition and fees if such student fulfills

1 the requirements of such program pursuant to the provisions of this  
2 paragraph.

3 (i) The trustees shall provide an application process and administer  
4 the program according to the following criteria:

5 (A) Any student eligible for resident tuition rates is eligible for  
6 this program.

7 (B) A student shall be required to sign a contract agreeing to reside  
8 in New York state for a period of five years subsequent to completion of  
9 their academic program.

10 (C) Students shall be required to complete their degree program within  
11 a minimum period of time to be set by the trustees which shall be no  
12 less than three years and no more than five years.

13 (D) A student who benefited from the program outlined in this para-  
14 graph shall be allowed to attend an out-of-state graduate school without  
15 any penalty if such student pursues a graduate degree. Once such student  
16 concludes their graduate school studies, such student shall return to  
17 New York within one year for residency per the program's requirements,  
18 or else the undergraduate benefit will turn into a student loan pursuant  
19 to the provisions of subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph.

20 (E) A student who benefited from the program outlined in this para-  
21 graph who is on active duty in the armed forces of the United States  
22 shall not be penalized if such student maintains their legal residence  
23 in the state of New York, during such service. "Legal residence" as used  
24 in this clause shall mean the place where a member of the military  
25 intends to return and live after discharge or retirement, and which they  
26 consider their permanent home. Legal residency shall be determined by  
27 what local and state tax laws a member of the military is subject to,  
28 and in which state they may vote.

29 (ii) If a student or former student fails to fulfill any of the  
30 requirements set forth in subparagraph (i) of this paragraph, the trus-  
31 tees shall convert to a student loan the full amount of the tuition  
32 which would have been paid by such student, as determined by the New  
33 York state higher education services corporation, plus interest, accord-  
34 ing to a schedule to be determined by such corporation. Such repayment  
35 may also be required if a recipient fails to respond to requests for  
36 information necessary to determine continued eligibility or for adminis-  
37 tration of the program. The terms and conditions of this clause shall  
38 be deferred for students who enroll on at least a half-time basis in an  
39 approved undergraduate, graduate or higher degree program or other  
40 professional licensure degree program until they are conferred a degree,  
41 and shall also be deferred for any interruption in undergraduate study  
42 as established by the rules and regulations of the corporation. The  
43 terms and conditions of this clause may also be deferred for a grace  
44 period, to be established by the corporation, following the completion  
45 of an approved undergraduate program or a graduate or higher degree  
46 program or other professional licensure degree program. Notwithstanding  
47 any provisions of this clause to the contrary, the corporation is  
48 authorized to promulgate rules and regulations to provide for the waiver  
49 or suspension of any financial obligation which would involve extreme  
50 hardship.

51 (iii) Any student who elects to participate in the program under this  
52 paragraph shall be required to apply for tuition assistance program  
53 funding. Funds awarded on the tuition assistance program shall be  
54 applied towards the cost of tuition prior to an award under this subpar-  
55 agraph.

1 (iv) Students shall be responsible for all other costs including hous-  
2 ing, fees and other non-tuition related charges.

3 (v) The provisions of this subdivision shall not be subject to taxa-  
4 tion.

5 (vi) (A) This program shall not apply in academic years commencing on  
6 or before the effective date of this paragraph. (B) For the first two  
7 years after the effective date of this paragraph, this program shall  
8 only apply to students attending community colleges as defined by subdivi-  
9 sion two of section sixty-three hundred one of this title. (C) In all  
10 other years, this program shall apply to all students attending SUNY,  
11 CUNY and community colleges of the state.

12 § 4. Subdivision 1 of section 6304 of the education law is amended by  
13 adding a new paragraph e to read as follows:

14 e. The trustees, sponsors or other governing body of a community  
15 college shall implement a program to permit any student who has been  
16 admitted to such community college to attend without the payment of  
17 tuition and fees if such student fulfills the requirements of such  
18 program pursuant to the provisions of this paragraph.

19 (i) The trustees shall provide an application process and administer  
20 the program according to the following criteria:

21 (A) Any student eligible for resident tuition rates is eligible for  
22 this program.

23 (B) A student shall be required to sign a contract agreeing to reside  
24 in New York state for a period of five years subsequent to completion of  
25 their academic program.

26 (C) Students shall be required to complete their degree program within  
27 a minimum period of time to be set by the trustees which shall be no  
28 less than one year and no more than three years.

29 (D) A student who benefited from the program outlined in this subpara-  
30 graph shall be allowed to attend an out-of-state graduate school without  
31 any penalty if such student pursues a graduate degree. Once such student  
32 concludes their graduate school studies, such student shall return to  
33 New York within one year for residency per the program's requirements,  
34 or else the undergraduate benefit will turn into a student loan pursuant  
35 to the provisions of subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph.

36 (E) A student who benefited from the program outlined in this para-  
37 graph who is on active duty in the armed forces of the United States  
38 shall not be penalized if such student maintains their legal residence  
39 in the state of New York, during such service. "Legal residence" as used  
40 in this clause shall mean the place where a member of the military  
41 intends to return and live after discharge or retirement, and which they  
42 consider their permanent home. Legal residency shall be determined by  
43 what local and state tax laws a member of the military is subject to,  
44 and in which state they may vote.

45 (ii) If a student or former student fails to fulfill any of the  
46 requirements set forth in subparagraph (i) of this paragraph, the trus-  
47 tees shall convert to a student loan the full amount of the tuition  
48 which would have been paid by such student, as determined by the New  
49 York state higher education services corporation, plus interest, accord-  
50 ing to a schedule to be determined by such corporation. Such repayment  
51 may also be required if a recipient fails to respond to requests for  
52 information necessary to determine continued eligibility or for adminis-  
53 tration of the program. The terms and conditions of this subparagraph  
54 shall be deferred for students who enroll on at least a half-time basis  
55 in an approved undergraduate, graduate or higher degree program or other  
56 professional licensure degree program until they are conferred a degree,

1 and shall also be deferred for any interruption in undergraduate study  
2 as established by the rules and regulations of the corporation. The  
3 terms and conditions of this subparagraph may also be deferred for a  
4 grace period, to be established by the corporation, following the  
5 completion of an approved undergraduate program or a graduate or higher  
6 degree program or other professional licensure degree program. Notwith-  
7 standing any provisions of this subparagraph to the contrary, the corpo-  
8 ration is authorized to promulgate rules and regulations to provide for  
9 the waiver or suspension of any financial obligation which would involve  
10 extreme hardship.

11 (iii) Any student who elects to participate in the program under this  
12 paragraph shall be required to apply for tuition assistance program  
13 funding. Funds awarded on the tuition assistance program shall be  
14 applied towards the cost of tuition prior to an award under this subpar-  
15 agraph.

16 (iv) Students shall be responsible for all other costs including hous-  
17 ing, fees and other non-tuition related charges.

18 (v) (A) This program shall not apply in academic years commencing on  
19 or before the effective date of this paragraph. (B) For the first two  
20 years after the effective date of this paragraph, this program shall  
21 only apply to students attending community colleges as defined by subdi-  
22 vision two of section sixty-three hundred one of this article. (C) In  
23 all other years, this program shall apply to all students attending  
24 SUNY, CUNY and community colleges of the state.

25 § 5. Subdivision 1 of section 6304 of the education law is amended by  
26 adding a new paragraph a-1 to read as follows:

27 a-1. State financial aid shall be increased above the one-third amount  
28 of operating costs set forth in paragraph a of this subdivision by an  
29 amount which is equal to the cost of tuition awarded to students who  
30 apply and qualify for the program set forth in paragraph e of this  
31 subdivision.

32 § 6. This act shall take effect on the first of April next succeeding  
33 the date on which it shall have become a law. Effective immediately,  
34 the addition, amendment and/or repeal of any rule or regulation neces-  
35 sary for the implementation of this act on its effective date are  
36 authorized to be made and completed on or before such effective date.