STATE OF NEW YORK

9659

IN ASSEMBLY

March 27, 2024

Introduced by M. of A. REILLY -- read once and referred to the Committee on Higher Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to directing the board of trustees of the state university of New York and the board of trustees of the city university of New York to develop and administer the tuition exemption for law enforcement program

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

Section 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "tuition exemption for law enforcement officers act" or the "TELE act".

§ 2. The education law is amended by adding a new section 669-i to read as follows:

§ 669-i. Tuition exemption for law enforcement program. 1. Definition. For purposes of this section, "police officer" means a member of a police force or other organization of a municipality who is responsible for the prevention and detection of crime and the enforcement of the general criminal laws of the state, but shall not include any person serving as such solely by virtue of his occupying any other office or position, nor shall such term include a sheriff, under-sheriff, commissioner of police, chief of police, deputy or assistant chief of police or any person having an equivalent title who is appointed or employed by a municipality to exercise equivalent supervisory authority.

2. Administration. (a) The board of trustees of the state university of New York and the board of trustees of the city university of New York are hereby directed to develop and administer the tuition exemption for law enforcement program. Such program shall be offered exclusively to active-duty police officers to provide an incentive to maintain and increase employment levels at law enforcement agencies.

(b) Law enforcement agencies which employ police officers which apply for and receive such tuition exemptions shall monitor and enforce the commitments outlined in this section.

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

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(c) The state university of New York and the city university of New York shall coordinate with law enforcement agencies to verify enrollment and eligibility criteria for the tuition exemption under this section.

(d) The state university of New York and the city university of New York shall coordinate with law enforcement agencies to develop an application process for the tuition exemption under this section.

(e) If the grade point average of a participating police officer is less than 3.0, then such officer shall be placed on probation from the tuition exemption program for one semester. If the grade point average does not return to 3.0 or greater within one semester, then such officer shall become ineligible for the tuition exemption program.

3. Tuition exemption. Police officers enrolled in full-time or part-time degree programs, including credit and non-credit bearing programs, at the state university of New York or the city university of New York, including community colleges, shall be exempt from tuition and fees for the duration of their enrollment. Such tuition exemption shall be applied to the cost of any courses or programs offered by the state university of New York or the city university of New York.

4. Commitment to service. (a) Any police officer benefiting from the tuition exemption under this section shall commit to serving a state or municipal law enforcement agency for a minimum period of:

(i) Five years if enrolled in an associate degree or workforce program or until the criteria for retirement from such office are met.

(ii) Ten years if enrolled in an undergraduate degree or until the criteria for retirement from such office are met.

(iii) Five years if enrolled in a graduate degree or until the criteria for retirement from such office are met.

(b) Failure to fulfill the commitment outlined in paragraph (a) of this subdivision shall result in such police officer being obligated to repay a proportional amount of the tuition waived, based on the number of years served.

(i) If the employment of a police officer is terminated with their respective agency before completing the commitment period specified in this subdivision, such officer shall repay a prorated amount of the tuition waived to the state university of New York or the city university of New York.

(ii) The prorated repayment specified in this subdivision shall be made within a reasonable period determined by the state university of New York or the city university of New York following such police officer's termination of employment or resignation.

(c) Should such police officer be injured in the line of duty or removed from their office due to medical necessity, the commitment to service shall be deemed to have been met in full. The agency by which such police officer is employed shall submit proof of injury or medical leave to the state university of New York or the city university of New York.

5. Funding. The state university of New York and the city university of New York are hereby directed to establish a police officer tuition exemption account to support this section. Any costs incurred by the state university of New York and the city university of New York from such tuition exemption account shall be reimbursed from the general fund.

§ 3. This act shall take effect on the one hundred eightieth day after it shall have become a law.