STATE OF NEW YORK

3139

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

January 23, 2025

Introduced by Sens. COONEY, FERNANDEZ, HELMING, MATTERA, OBERACKER, RHOADS, ROLISON, TEDISCO, WEBB, WEBER -- 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 providing free SUNY, CUNY and community college tuition to active volunteer firefighters, volunteer emergency medical services providers, and volunteer auxiliary police officers

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

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

(1-a) The trustees shall implement a program to permit any student who has been admitted to a state-operated institution of the state university to attend without the payment of tuition and fees if such student serves as an active volunteer firefighter, as defined in subdivision one of section two hundred fifteen of the general municipal law, volunteer emergency medical services provider, or volunteer auxiliary police officer. The provisions of this subparagraph shall only apply to costs of one undergraduate degree and any additional costs associated with more than one simultaneous undergraduate degree shall not be covered by this program.

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

(A) Any student eligible for resident tuition rates is eligible for this program, provided that at the time of application, such student submits proof of membership in good standing of a volunteer fire company or department, volunteer emergency medical services provider or a volunteer auxiliary police officer of a police department within the state of New York.

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

LBD03276-01-5

(B) The student shall be required to maintain status as a member in good standing of the volunteer fire company or department, volunteer emergency medical service provider or police department in which such student serves as an auxiliary police officer through the completion of such student's academic program.

(C) The student shall be required to maintain a cumulative grade point average (G.P.A.) of at least 2.5 in order to remain eligible for the program.

(ii) If a student or former student fails to fulfill any of the requirements set forth in clause (i) of this subparagraph, the trustees shall convert to a student loan the full amount of the tuition which would have been paid by such student, as determined by the New York state higher education services corporation, plus interest, according to a schedule to be determined by such corporation. Such repayment may also be required if a recipient fails to respond to requests for information necessary to determine continued eligibility or for administration of the program.

(iii) Any student who elects to participate in the program under this subparagraph shall be required to apply for tuition assistance program funding. Funds awarded on the tuition assistance program shall be applied towards the cost of tuition prior to an award under this clause.

(iv) Any student who elects to participate in the program under this subparagraph and is otherwise eligible for the excelsior scholarship program shall be required to apply for same. Funds awarded through the excelsior scholarship program shall be applied towards the cost of tuition prior to an award under this clause.

(v) Students shall be responsible for all other costs including housing, fees and other non-tuition related charges.

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

(g) The trustees shall implement a program to permit any student who has been admitted to an institution operated by the city university to attend without the payment of tuition and fees if such student fulfills the requirements of such program pursuant to the provisions of this paragraph.

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

(A) Any student eligible for resident tuition rates is eligible for this program, provided that at the time of application, such student submits proof of membership in good standing of a volunteer fire company or department, volunteer medical services provider or a volunteer auxiliary police officer of a police department within the state of New York.

(B) The student shall be required to maintain status as a member in good standing of the volunteer fire company or department, volunteer emergency medical service provider or police department in which such student serves as an auxiliary police officer through the completion of such student's academic program.

(C) The student shall be required to maintain a cumulative grade point average (G.P.A.) of at least 2.5 in order to remain eligible for the program.

(ii) If a student or former student fails to fulfill any of the requirements set forth in subparagraph (i) of this paragraph, the trustees shall convert to a student loan the full amount of the tuition which would have been paid by such student, as determined by the New York state higher education services corporation, plus interest, according to a schedule to be determined by such corporation. Such repayment

may also be required if a recipient fails to respond to requests for information necessary to determine continued eligibility or for administration of the program.

(iii) Any student who elects to participate in the program under this paragraph shall be required to apply for tuition assistance program funding. Funds awarded on the tuition assistance program shall be applied towards the cost of tuition prior to an award under this subparagraph.

(iv) Any student who elects to participate in the program under this subparagraph and is otherwise eligible for the excelsior scholarship program shall be required to apply for same. Funds awarded through the excelsior scholarship program shall be applied towards the cost of tuition prior to an award under this clause.

(v) Students shall be responsible for all other costs including housing, fees and other non-tuition related charges.

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

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

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

(A) Any student eligible for resident tuition rates is eligible for this program, provided that at the time of application, such student submits proof of membership in good standing of a volunteer fire company or department, volunteer medical services provider or a volunteer auxiliary police officer of a police department within the state of New York.

(B) The student shall be required to maintain status as a member in good standing of the volunteer fire company or department, volunteer emergency medical service provider or police department in which such student serves as an auxiliary police officer through the completion of such student's academic program.

(C) The student shall be required to maintain a cumulative grade point average (G.P.A.) of at least 2.5 in order to remain eligible for the program.

(ii) If a student or former student fails to fulfill any of the requirements set forth in subparagraph (i) of this paragraph, the trustees shall convert to a student loan the full amount of the tuition which would have been paid by such student, as determined by the New York state higher education services corporation, plus interest, according to a schedule to be determined by such corporation. Such repayment may also be required if a recipient fails to respond to requests for information necessary to determine continued eligibility or for administration of the program.

(iii) Any student who elects to participate in the program under this paragraph shall be required to apply for tuition assistance program funding. Funds awarded on the tuition assistance program shall be applied towards the cost of tuition prior to an award under this subparagraph.

(iv) Any student who elects to participate in the program under this subparagraph and is otherwise eligible for the excelsior scholarship program shall be required to apply for same. Funds awarded through the excelsior scholarship program shall be applied towards the cost of tuition prior to an award under this clause.

(v) Students shall be responsible for all other costs including housing, fees and other non-tuition related charges.

§ 4. This act shall take effect on the ninetieth day after it shall have become a law.