

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:

1 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:

2
3 (1-a) The trustees shall implement a program to permit any student who
4 has been admitted to a state-operated institution of the state university
5 to attend without the payment of tuition and fees if such student
6 serves as an active volunteer firefighter, as defined in subdivision one
7 of section two hundred fifteen of the general municipal law, volunteer
8 emergency medical services provider, or volunteer auxiliary police officer.
9 The provisions of this subparagraph shall only apply to costs of
10 one undergraduate degree and any additional costs associated with more
11 than one simultaneous undergraduate degree shall not be covered by this
12 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, provided that at the time of application, such student
17 submits proof of membership in good standing of a volunteer fire company
18 or department, volunteer emergency medical services provider or a volun-
19 teer auxiliary police officer of a police department within the state of
20 New York.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 may also be required if a recipient fails to respond to requests for
2 information necessary to determine continued eligibility or for adminis-
3 tration of the program.

4 (iii) Any student who elects to participate in the program under this
5 paragraph shall be required to apply for tuition assistance program
6 funding. Funds awarded on the tuition assistance program shall be
7 applied towards the cost of tuition prior to an award under this subpar-
8 agraph.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

38 (ii) If a student or former student fails to fulfill any of the
39 requirements set forth in subparagraph (i) of this paragraph, the trus-
40 tees shall convert to a student loan the full amount of the tuition
41 which would have been paid by such student, as determined by the New
42 York state higher education services corporation, plus interest, accord-
43 ing to a schedule to be determined by such corporation. Such repayment
44 may also be required if a recipient fails to respond to requests for
45 information necessary to determine continued eligibility or for adminis-
46 tration of the program.

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

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

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

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