

STATE OF NEW YORK

5520

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

February 24, 2025

Introduced by Sen. 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 establishing a COVID-19 essential workers scholarship program

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

1 Section 1. The education law is amended by adding a new section 608-b
2 to read as follows:

3 § 608-b. COVID-19 essential worker scholarships. 1. Notwithstanding
4 subdivision five of section six hundred sixty-one of this title, essen-
5 tial employees who worked during the outbreak of novel coronavirus
6 disease two thousand nineteen (COVID-19) and children of essential
7 employees who have died as a result of contracting COVID-19, shall be
8 eligible to receive a scholarship in an annual amount determined pursu-
9 ant to subdivision two of section six hundred sixty-eight-h of this
10 title. The commissioner shall promulgate rules and regulations regarding
11 who qualifies as an essential employee.

12 2. Awards under this section shall be payable for each of not more
13 than four academic years of undergraduate study or five academic years
14 if a program normally requires five years, as defined by the commission-
15 er pursuant to this article.

16 § 2. The education law is amended by adding a new section 668-h to
17 read as follows:

18 § 668-h. COVID-19 essential worker scholarships. 1. Eligible groups.
19 Notwithstanding subdivision five of section six hundred sixty-one of
20 this part, essential employees who worked during the outbreak of novel
21 coronavirus disease two thousand nineteen (COVID-19) and children of
22 essential employees who have died as a result of contracting COVID-19,
23 shall be eligible to receive a scholarship. The commissioner shall
24 promulgate rules and regulations regarding who qualifies as an essential
25 employee.

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

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1 2. Amount. (a) The president shall grant annual scholarships in the
2 following amounts:

3 (1) If the recipient attends an institution of the city university of
4 New York or an institution of the state university of New York other
5 than the statutory colleges at Cornell, the college of environmental
6 science and forestry at Syracuse and the college of ceramics at Alfred,
7 the annual award shall be an amount equal to: the tuition charged at
8 such institution provided that, notwithstanding any provision of law to
9 the contrary, the tuition charged to award recipients shall not exceed
10 that charged to state resident students attending such institution; the
11 mandatory fees charged at such institution; and the non-tuition cost of
12 attendance at such institution or college, provided that the scholarship
13 shall not exceed an amount that is equal to the total cost of attendance
14 determined for federal Title IV student financial aid purposes, less all
15 other scholarships and grants provided by New York state, other states,
16 the federal government, or other governments, and the amount of educa-
17 tional benefits paid under any program that would duplicate the purposes
18 of this program, provided that any scholarships or grants provided to a
19 recipient by the institution which are intended to fund any portion of
20 the difference between the annual state award and the actual costs of
21 attendance at any such institution shall not be considered to duplicate
22 the purposes of this program; or

23 (2) If the recipient attends any other approved program within New
24 York state, the annual award shall be based upon an amount equal to: the
25 tuition charged to state resident students attending a four-year college
26 of the state university of New York; the average mandatory fees charged
27 at four-year colleges of the state university of New York, or the actual
28 tuition and fees charged to the recipient, whichever is less; and the
29 average non-tuition cost of attendance, as determined by the president
30 and as approved by the director of the budget, for a student at the
31 state university of New York or actual non-tuition cost of attendance at
32 such institution, whichever is less, provided that the scholarship shall
33 not exceed an amount that is equal to the total cost of attendance
34 determined for federal Title IV student financial aid purposes, less all
35 other scholarships and grants provided by New York state, other states,
36 the federal government, or other governments, and the amount of educa-
37 tional benefits paid under any program that would duplicate the purposes
38 of this program, provided that any scholarships or grants provided to a
39 recipient by the institution which are intended to fund any portion of
40 the difference between the annual state award and the actual costs of
41 attendance at any such institution shall not be considered to duplicate
42 the purposes of this program.

43 (3) "Non-tuition cost of attendance", as used in this subdivision,
44 shall mean: (i) the actual amount charged by the institution for room
45 and board, and (ii) an allowance for transportation, books and supplies
46 as determined by the president and as approved by the director of the
47 budget, provided that such determination shall be made no later than
48 December first of each year for use in the succeeding academic year. In
49 the event a student does not incur room or board charges at the institu-
50 tion, "non-tuition cost of attendance" shall mean an allowance for room
51 and board as determined by the president and approved by the director of
52 the budget. In determining allowances pursuant to this subparagraph, the
53 president may take into consideration the allowances provided for in the
54 Pell grant program.

1 (b) In no event shall the combination of all student financial aid
2 received by a student exceed a recipient's total cost of attendance at
3 the institution being attended.

4 3. Duration. Awards under this section shall be payable for each of
5 not more than four academic years of undergraduate study or five academ-
6 ic years if a program normally requires five years, as defined by the
7 commissioner pursuant to article thirteen of this title.

8 § 3. Section 604 of the education law is amended by adding a new
9 subdivision 13 to read as follows:

10 13. COVID-19 essential worker scholarships.

11 § 4. This act shall take effect immediately.