

# STATE OF NEW YORK

2049

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

## IN SENATE

January 15, 2025

Introduced by Sen. WEBB -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Higher Education

AN ACT to amend the education law and the state finance law, in relation to providing free tuition to students who attend the state university of New York

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 "new deal for  
2 SUNY: the New York state higher education equality act".

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) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, rule or regulation  
6 to the contrary, the trustees shall implement a program to permit any  
7 student who has been admitted to a state-operated institution of the  
8 state university of New York to attend without the payment of tuition  
9 and fees if such student fulfills the requirements of such program  
10 pursuant to the provisions of this subparagraph.

11 (i) The trustees shall provide an application process and administer  
12 the program which shall be available to any student eligible for resi-  
13 dent tuition rates, who is enrolled in credit-bearing academic course-  
14 work and is on track to graduate.

15 (ii) Any student not successfully completing credit-bearing academic  
16 coursework in a semester shall still be eligible to receive all other  
17 grants, awards, and scholarships for which they qualify but shall not be  
18 eligible for the tuition and student fee waiver described herein.

19 (iii) Students shall be eligible to receive a one semester exemption  
20 from the requirement to complete credit-bearing academic coursework for  
21 such tuition waiver as promulgated by the trustees. Such exemption shall  
22 not preclude any student from exercising their right to appeal pursuant  
23 to higher education services corporation policy.

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

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1 (iv) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, rule or regulation to  
2 the contrary subject to amounts made available by appropriation,  
3 commencing in the academic year next succeeding the effective date of  
4 this subdivision, and every academic year thereafter, the state univer-  
5 sity shall be entitled to annually receive one hundred percent  
6 reimbursement for the annual cost of tuition and student fees for each  
7 matriculated undergraduate student at a state university senior college  
8 and community college who is enrolled in credit-bearing academic course-  
9 work and is on track to graduate from the fund established pursuant to  
10 section ninety-seven-aaaa of the state finance law.

11 § 3. Section 667 of the education law is amended by adding a new  
12 subdivision 1-a to read as follows:

13 1-a. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, rule or regulation to  
14 the contrary, commencing in the academic year next succeeding the effec-  
15 tive date of this subdivision, and every academic year thereafter, all  
16 funding appropriated for tuition assistance program awards pursuant to  
17 this section shall be deposited into the fund specified in section nine-  
18 ty-seven-aaaa of the state finance law.

19 § 4. Section 669-h of the education law is amended by adding a new  
20 subdivision 7 to read as follows:

21 7. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, rule or regulation to  
22 the contrary, commencing in the academic year next succeeding the effec-  
23 tive date of this subdivision, and every academic year thereafter, all  
24 funding appropriated for the excelsior scholarship pursuant to this  
25 section shall be deposited into the fund specified in section ninety-  
26 seven-aaaa of the state finance law.

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

29 e. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, rule or regulation to  
30 the contrary, the trustees, sponsors, or other governing body of a  
31 community college shall implement a program to permit any student who  
32 has been admitted to a state-operated institution of the state universi-  
33 ty to attend without the payment of tuition and fees if such student  
34 fulfills the requirements of such program pursuant to the provisions of  
35 this paragraph.

36 (i) The trustees shall provide an application process and administer  
37 the program which shall be available to any student eligible for resi-  
38 dent tuition rates, who is enrolled in credit-bearing academic course-  
39 work and is on track to graduate.

40 (ii) Any student not successfully completing credit-bearing academic  
41 coursework in a semester shall still be eligible to receive all other  
42 grants, awards, and scholarships for which they qualify but shall not be  
43 eligible for the tuition and student fee waiver described herein.

44 (iii) Students shall be eligible to receive a one semester exemption  
45 from the requirement to complete credit-bearing academic coursework for  
46 such tuition waiver as promulgated by the trustees. Such exemption shall  
47 not preclude any student from exercising their right to appeal pursuant  
48 to higher education services corporation policy.

49 § 6. Subdivision 1 of section 6304 of the education law is amended by  
50 adding a new paragraph a-1 to read as follows:

51 a-1. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, rule or regulation to  
52 the contrary, state financial aid shall be increased above the one-third  
53 amount of operating costs set forth in paragraph a of this subdivision  
54 by an amount which is equal to the cost of tuition awarded to students  
55 who apply and qualify for the program set forth in paragraph e of this

1 subdivision and such aid shall be deposited into the fund specified in  
2 section ninety-seven-aaaa of the state finance law.

3 § 7. The state finance law is amended by adding a new section 97-aaaa  
4 to read as follows:

5 § 97-aaaa. State university tuition fund. 1. There is hereby estab-  
6 lished in the joint custody of the state comptroller and the commission-  
7 er of taxation and finance a fund to be known as the state university  
8 tuition fund.

9 2. The fund shall consist of moneys received by the state pursuant to  
10 subparagraph one-a of paragraph h of subdivision two of section three  
11 hundred fifty-five of the education law, moneys donated or given to the  
12 state, and all other moneys appropriated, credited or transferred there-  
13 to from any other fund or source.

14 3. Moneys of the fund shall be made available to the commissioner of  
15 education to be distributed to the state university of New York and  
16 shall be deposited with the state university no later than thirty days  
17 after the start of the semester. The state university shall receive an  
18 amount equal to the full cost of in-state undergraduate tuition and  
19 student fees for each qualifying, matriculated student who successfully  
20 completes credit-bearing academic coursework and is on track to graduate  
21 from the state university.

22 4. The full cost of tuition shall not include any additional funds the  
23 student may receive from any other New York state or federal grant,  
24 award, or scholarship program.

25 5. The deposit of these funds shall be utilized as first dollar awards  
26 to the students at the state university.

27 § 8. This act shall take effect immediately.