

Second Regular Session
Seventy-second General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO

DRAFT
10.3.19

BILL 4

LLS NO. 20-0410.01 Julie Pelegrin x2700

INTERIM COMMITTEE BILL

Making Higher Education Attainable Interim Study Committee

BILL TOPIC: "Higher Ed Student Emergency Assistance Grants"

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 **CONCERNING PROVIDING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANTS TO**
102 **STUDENTS ENROLLED IN STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER**
103 **EDUCATION TO ASSIST STUDENTS IN STAYING IN SCHOOL, AND, IN**
104 **CONNECTION THEREWITH, CREATING THE EMERGENCY**
105 **COMPLETION AND RETENTION GRANT PROGRAM.**

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov/>.)

Making Higher Education Attainable Interim Study Committee. The bill creates the emergency completion and retention

*Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing statute.
Dashes through the words indicate deletions from existing statute.*

grant program (grant program) in the department of higher education (department). The department implements the grant program by annually distributing an amount to each state institution of higher education (institution) to use in awarding emergency assistance grants to eligible students who are experiencing qualifying financial emergencies. The bill describes minimum procedures an institution must adopt for the financial aid director at the institution to award the emergency assistance grants. The department is required to include in the annual financial aid report submitted to the joint budget committee a summary of the implementation of the grant program and an evaluation of its effect in increasing the retention and completion rates at institutions.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:

SECTION 1. In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** part 13 to article 3.3 of title 23 as follows:

PART 13

EMERGENCY COMPLETION AND
RETENTION GRANT PROGRAM

23-3.3-1301. Legislative declaration. THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINDS THAT THE STUDENT FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS EXISTING UNDER STATE LAW ARE DESIGNED TO REDUCE A STUDENT'S OVERALL COST OF ATTENDANCE AT AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION. THERE ARE TIMES, HOWEVER, WHEN A STUDENT FACES A SUDDEN FINANCIAL EMERGENCY AND IS FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN CONTINUING HIS OR HER EDUCATION OR PAYING FOR THE EMERGENCY. THE STUDENT FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS LACK THE FLEXIBILITY NECESSARY TO ASSIST A STUDENT IN THIS SITUATION. THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINDS, THEREFORE, THAT A PROGRAM THAT PROVIDES LIMITED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO ELIGIBLE STUDENTS WHO FACE UNANTICIPATED FISCAL EMERGENCIES IS NECESSARY TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO PERSIST AND GRADUATE WITH A POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL, REDUCE THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS

1 WHO DO NOT COMPLETE THEIR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, AND MEET
2 THE WORKFORCE NEEDS OF BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY IN THE STATE.

3 **23-3.3-1302. Definitions.** AS USED IN THIS PART 13, UNLESS THE
4 CONTEXT OTHERWISE REQUIRES:

5 (1) "DEPARTMENT" MEANS THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER
6 EDUCATION CREATED AND EXISTING PURSUANT TO SECTION 24-1-114.

7 (2) "ELIGIBLE COURSE OF STUDY" MEANS CREDIT HOURS TAKEN TO
8 COMPLETE A CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION CERTIFICATE, AN
9 ASSOCIATE DEGREE, OR A BACCALAUREATE DEGREE.

10 (3) "ELIGIBLE STUDENT" MEANS A STUDENT WHO:

11 (a) QUALIFIES FOR IN-STATE TUITION AS PROVIDED IN THIS TITLE
12 23;

13 (b) IS ENROLLED IN A STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION TO
14 OBTAIN A FIRST POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL IN AN ELIGIBLE COURSE OF
15 STUDY;

16 (c) MEETS THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA SPECIFIED IN THE STATE
17 STUDENT FINANCIAL AID GUIDELINES; AND

18 (d) HAS COMPLETED MORE THAN SIXTY PERCENT OF THE COURSE
19 CREDITS REQUIRED IN THE ELIGIBLE COURSE OF STUDY AND IS EXPECTED
20 TO GRADUATE IN THE NEXT SEMESTER OR SCHOOL YEAR FOLLOWING THE
21 DATE ON WHICH THE STUDENT APPLIES FOR EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE.

22 (4) "FINANCIAL AID DIRECTOR" MEANS THE FINANCIAL AID
23 DIRECTOR FOR A STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION, OR HIS OR HER
24 DESIGNEE.

25 (5) "GRANT PROGRAM" MEANS THE EMERGENCY COMPLETION AND
26 RETENTION GRANT PROGRAM CREATED IN SECTION 23-3.3-1303.

27 (6) "QUALIFYING FINANCIAL EMERGENCY" MEANS AN UNEXPECTED

1 EVENT THAT CAUSES AN ELIGIBLE STUDENT TO INCUR A LEVEL OF
2 UNPLANNED COST THAT MAY REQUIRE THE ELIGIBLE STUDENT TO
3 WITHDRAW FROM POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION. A QUALIFYING FINANCIAL
4 EMERGENCY MAY INCLUDE, BUT NEED NOT BE LIMITED TO:

5 (a) INCURRING COSTS FOR VEHICLE REPAIR;

6 (b) BEING UNABLE TO PAY RENT OR PURCHASE FOOD AS A RESULT
7 OF UNEXPECTED, EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES, AS DETERMINED BY THE
8 FINANCIAL AID DIRECTOR;

9 (c) INCURRING COSTS AS A RESULT OF A MEDICAL EMERGENCY;

10 (d) INCURRING TRAVEL OR OTHER COSTS AS A RESULT OF A FAMILY
11 EMERGENCY;

12 (e) INCURRING OTHER NECESSARY COSTS THAT ARE NOT
13 PREDICTABLE EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES, AS DETERMINED BY THE
14 FINANCIAL AID DIRECTOR; AND

15 (f) OTHER SITUATIONS AS MAY BE IDENTIFIED BY THE STATE
16 HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION.

17 (7) "STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION" MEANS A STATE
18 INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AS DEFINED IN SECTION 23-18-102, A
19 LOCAL DISTRICT COLLEGE OPERATING PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 71 OF THIS
20 TITLE 23, OR AN AREA TECHNICAL COLLEGE AS DEFINED IN SECTION
21 23-60-103.

22 **23-3.3-1303. Emergency completion and retention grant**
23 **program - created - administration.** (1) THERE IS CREATED IN THE
24 DEPARTMENT THE EMERGENCY COMPLETION AND RETENTION GRANT
25 PROGRAM TO PROVIDE MONEY TO STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS
26 TO USE IN ASSISTING ELIGIBLE STUDENTS WHO EXPERIENCE A QUALIFYING
27 FINANCIAL EMERGENCY. THE COMMISSION SHALL ADMINISTER THE GRANT

1 PROGRAM BY:

2 (a) SUBJECT TO ANNUAL APPROPRIATIONS, ANNUALLY
3 DISTRIBUTING MONEY TO THE STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO
4 USE FOR EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANTS AWARDED TO STUDENTS
5 PURSUANT TO SECTION 23-3.3-1304 TO ADDRESS QUALIFYING FINANCIAL
6 EMERGENCIES;

7 (b) ADOPTING GUIDELINES, INCLUDING STUDENT ELIGIBILITY
8 CRITERIA, FOR USE BY THE FINANCIAL AID DIRECTORS AT THE STATE
9 HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN PROVIDING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE
10 GRANTS TO STUDENTS;

11 (c) ESTABLISHING THE REPORTING CRITERIA FOR THE STATE
12 HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO ENABLE THE DEPARTMENT TO
13 MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF THE GRANT PROGRAM IN RAISING THE STUDENT
14 PERSISTENCE AND GRADUATION RATES AT THE STATE HIGHER EDUCATION
15 INSTITUTIONS;

16 (d) DIRECTING THE DEPARTMENT TO ACT AS A CLEARINGHOUSE
17 FOR INFORMATION CONCERNING THE GRANT PROGRAM, INCLUDING
18 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND EXAMPLES OF MATERIALS THAT STATE HIGHER
19 EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS MAY USE IN PUBLICIZING TO STUDENTS THE
20 AVAILABILITY OF EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANTS; AND

21 (e) INCLUDING IN THE INFORMATION ANNUALLY SUBMITTED TO
22 THE JOINT BUDGET COMMITTEE PURSUANT TO SECTION 23-3.3-102 (7) THE
23 AMOUNT ANNUALLY DISTRIBUTED TO EACH STATE HIGHER EDUCATION
24 INSTITUTION THROUGH THE GRANT PROGRAM, THE AMOUNTS DISTRIBUTED
25 IN EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANTS BY EACH STATE HIGHER EDUCATION
26 INSTITUTION, THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND TYPES OF EMERGENCIES FOR
27 WHICH GRANTS WERE PROVIDED, AND AN EVALUATION OF WHETHER THE

1 GRANT PROGRAM IS CONTRIBUTING TO AN INCREASE IN THE COMPLETION
2 AND RETENTION RATES AT THE STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS,
3 TO THE EXTENT SUFFICIENT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE. AFTER THE
4 GRANT PROGRAM HAS OPERATED FOR THREE FISCAL YEARS, THE ANNUAL
5 INFORMATION MUST ALSO INCLUDE THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT FOR THE
6 PROGRAM AS CALCULATED BY THE DEPARTMENT.

7 **23-3.3-1304. State higher education institutions - emergency**
8 **assistance grants.** (1) EACH STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION
9 SHALL DEVELOP A PROCESS BASED ON THE COMMISSION'S GUIDELINES BY
10 WHICH AN ELIGIBLE STUDENT MAY APPLY FOR AND RECEIVE AN
11 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANT.

12 (2) IN AWARDING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANTS, THE STATE
13 HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION SHALL PRIORITIZE ELIGIBLE STUDENTS
14 WHO ARE LOW-INCOME, ELIGIBLE STUDENTS WHO ARE IN THE FIRST
15 GENERATION OF THEIR FAMILY TO ENROLL IN POSTSECONDARY
16 EDUCATION, AND ELIGIBLE STUDENTS WHO LACK OTHER IDENTIFIABLE
17 FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THEIR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION.

18 (3) THE FINANCIAL AID DIRECTOR SHALL DETERMINE THE AMOUNT
19 OF EACH EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANT BASED ON THE ELIGIBLE
20 STUDENT'S LEVEL OF FINANCIAL NEED. AN ELIGIBLE STUDENT SHALL NOT
21 RECEIVE MORE THAN A TOTAL OF ONE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS
22 IN EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANTS WHILE ENROLLED AT A SINGLE STATE
23 HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION.

24 (4) IN DISBURSING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANTS, THE
25 FINANCIAL AID DIRECTOR SHALL DETERMINE THE MOST EFFICIENT MANNER
26 IN WHICH TO ADDRESS THE ELIGIBLE STUDENT'S QUALIFYING FINANCIAL
27 EMERGENCY, WHICH, WHERE APPROPRIATE, MAY INCLUDE PAYING A

1 VENDOR DIRECTLY FOR THE ELIGIBLE STUDENT'S EXPENSES.

2 (5) AS OF JUNE 1 OF EACH FISCAL YEAR, IF A STATE HIGHER
3 EDUCATION INSTITUTION HAS NOT DISTRIBUTED THE ENTIRE AMOUNT
4 ALLOCATED TO THE INSTITUTION FOR EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANTS
5 FOR THAT FISCAL YEAR, THE INSTITUTION MAY DISTRIBUTE THE
6 REMAINING AMOUNT AS EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANTS DURING THE
7 SUMMER SEMESTER OR DURING THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR OR DISTRIBUTE
8 ANY PORTION OF THE REMAINING AMOUNT AS NEED-BASED STUDENT
9 FINANCIAL AID.

10 **SECTION 2. Safety clause.** The general assembly hereby finds,
11 determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate
12 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety.