A BILL FOR AN ACT

CONCERNING PROVIDING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANTS TO
STUDENTS ENROLLED IN STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER
EDUCATION TO ASSIST STUDENTS IN STAYING IN SCHOOL, AND, IN
CONNECTION THEREWITH, CREATING THE EMERGENCY
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.)

The bill creates the emergency completion and retention grant program (grant program) in the department of higher education
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 shall 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 pursuant to 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. 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 who do not complete their postsecondary education, and meet...
THE WORKFORCE NEEDS OF BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY IN THE STATE.

23-3.3-1302. Definitions. As used in this Part 13, unless the context otherwise requires:

(1) "Department" means the Department of Higher Education created and existing pursuant to Section 24-1-114.

(2) "Eligible course of study" means credit hours taken to complete a career and technical education certificate, an associate degree, or a baccalaureate degree.

(3) "Eligible student" means a student who:

(a) Qualifies for in-state tuition as provided in this Title 23;

(b) Is enrolled in a state higher education institution to obtain a first postsecondary credential in an eligible course of study;

(c) Meets the eligibility criteria specified in the state student financial aid guidelines; and

(d) Has completed more than sixty percent of the course credits required in the eligible course of study and is expected to graduate in the next semester or school year following the date on which the student applies for emergency assistance.

(4) "Financial aid director" means the financial aid director for a state higher education institution, or his or her designee.

(5) "Grant program" means the emergency completion and retention grant program created in Section 23-3.3-1303.

(6) "Qualifying financial emergency" means an unexpected event that causes an eligible student to incur a level of
UNPLANNED COST THAT MAY REQUIRE THE ELIGIBLE STUDENT TO WITHDRAW FROM POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION. A QUALIFYING FINANCIAL EMERGENCY MAY INCLUDE, BUT NEED NOT BE LIMITED TO:

(a) INCURRING COSTS FOR VEHICLE REPAIR;

(b) BEING UNABLE TO PAY RENT OR PURCHASE FOOD AS A RESULT OF UNEXPECTED, EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES, AS THE FINANCIAL AID DIRECTOR MAY DETERMINE;

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

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

(e) INCURRING OTHER NECESSARY COSTS THAT ARE NOT PREDICTABLE EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES, AS THE FINANCIAL AID DIRECTOR MAY DETERMINE; AND

(f) OTHER SITUATIONS THAT THE STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION MAY IDENTIFY.

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

23-3.3-1303. Emergency completion and retention grant program - created - administration. (1) THERE IS CREATED IN THE DEPARTMENT THE EMERGENCY COMPLETION AND RETENTION GRANT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE MONEY TO STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO USE IN ASSISTING ELIGIBLE STUDENTS WHO EXPERIENCE A QUALIFYING FINANCIAL EMERGENCY. THE COMMISSION SHALL ADMINISTER THE Grant PROGRAM BY:
(a) **SUBJECT TO ANNUAL APPROPRIATIONS, ANNUALLY**

   DISTRIBUTING MONEY TO THE STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO
   USE FOR EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANTS AWARDED TO STUDENTS
   PURSUANT TO SECTION 23-3.3-1304 TO ADDRESS QUALIFYING FINANCIAL
   EMERGENCIES;

   (b) **ADOPTING GUIDELINES, INCLUDING STUDENT ELIGIBILITY**

   CRITERIA, FOR THE FINANCIAL AID DIRECTORS AT THE STATE HIGHER
   EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO USE IN PROVIDING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE
   GRANTS TO STUDENTS;

   (c) **ESTABLISHING THE REPORTING CRITERIA FOR THE STATE**

   HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO ENABLE THE DEPARTMENT TO
   MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF THE GRANT PROGRAM IN RAISING THE STUDENT
   PERSISTENCE AND GRADUATION RATES AT THE STATE HIGHER EDUCATION
   INSTITUTIONS;

   (d) **DIRECTING THE DEPARTMENT TO ACT AS A CLEARINGHOUSE**

   FOR INFORMATION CONCERNING THE GRANT PROGRAM, INCLUDING
   ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND EXAMPLES OF MATERIALS THAT STATE HIGHER
   EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS MAY USE IN PUBLICIZING TO STUDENTS THE
   AVAILABILITY OF EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANTS; AND

   (e) **INCLUDING IN THE INFORMATION ANNUALLY SUBMITTED TO**

   THE JOINT BUDGET COMMITTEE PURSUANT TO SECTION 23-3.3-102 (7) THE
   AMOUNT ANNUALLY DISTRIBUTED TO EACH STATE HIGHER EDUCATION
   INSTITUTION THROUGH THE GRANT PROGRAM, THE AMOUNTS THAT EACH
   STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION DISTRIBUTED IN EMERGENCY
   ASSISTANCE GRANTS, THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND TYPES OF
   EMERGENCIES FOR WHICH GRANTS WERE PROVIDED, AND AN EVALUATION
   OF WHETHER THE GRANT PROGRAM IS CONTRIBUTING TO AN INCREASE IN
THE COMPLETION AND RETENTION RATES AT THE STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, TO THE EXTENT SUFFICIENT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE. AFTER THE GRANT PROGRAM HAS OPERATED FOR THREE FISCAL YEARS, THE ANNUAL INFORMATION MUST ALSO INCLUDE THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT FOR THE PROGRAM AS CALCULATED BY THE DEPARTMENT.

23-3.3-1304. State higher education institutions - emergency assistance grants. (1) Each state higher education institution shall develop a process based on the commission's guidelines by which an eligible student may apply for and receive an emergency assistance grant.

(2) In awarding emergency assistance grants, the state higher education institution shall prioritize eligible students who are low-income, eligible students who are in the first generation of their family to enroll in postsecondary education, and eligible students who lack other identifiable financial resources to support their postsecondary education.

(3) The financial aid director shall determine the amount of each emergency assistance grant based on the eligible student's level of financial need. An eligible student shall not receive more than a total of five hundred dollars in emergency assistance grants while enrolled at a single state higher education institution.

(4) In disbursing emergency assistance grants, the financial aid director shall determine the most efficient manner in which to address the eligible student's qualifying financial emergency, which may include, when appropriate, paying a
VENDOR DIRECTLY FOR THE ELIGIBLE STUDENT'S EXPENSES.

(5) As of June 1 of each fiscal year, if a State Higher Education Institution has not distributed the entire amount allocated to the Institution for Emergency Assistance Grants for that fiscal year, the Institution may distribute the remaining amount as Emergency Assistance Grants during the summer semester or during the next fiscal year or distribute any portion of the remaining amount as need-based student financial aid.

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