

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

## **An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Stakeholder Group To Review the Maine State Grant Program**

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

**Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §11611, sub-§5**, as amended by PL 1991, c. 582, §1 and affected by §3, is further amended to read:

**5. Institution of higher education.** "Institution of higher education" means an institution of higher education located within this State, ~~within another state with which this State has a reciprocal agreement or within another state that permits portability. The institutions shall meet~~that meets the requirements of and ~~conform~~conforms to the definitions contained in the federal Higher Education Act of 1965, Section 1201, as amended, United States Code, Title 20, Section 1141; and the federal Higher Education Act of 1965, Section 491, as amended, United States Code, Title 20, Section 1088; and the regulations, guidelines and procedures promulgated by the Secretary of Education and published in the Federal Register pursuant to these sections of law.

**Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §11611, sub-§6**, as enacted by PL 1991, c. 582, §2 and affected by §3, is repealed.

**Sec. 3. 20-A MRSA §11614, sub-§2**, as amended by PL 2001, c. 70, §8, is further amended to read:

**2. Minimum amount.** It is the intent of the Legislature that grants awarded under this chapter, except as provided in subsections 4, 5 and 6, may not be less than: \$1,000 for students attending public institutions of higher education within the State; \$1,250 for students attending private institutions of higher education within the State; \$500 for students attending public institutions of higher education outside the State; and \$1,000 for students attending private institutions of higher education outside the State. Amounts less than the minimum amounts required by this subsection may be awarded to meet needs as determined under section 11613. The authority may not grant awards of less than \$200 to a full-time student. The authority may establish by rule increased grant amounts for students attending their 2nd, 3rd and 4th years, or the equivalents thereof, at institutions of higher education. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

**Sec. 4. 20-A MRSA §11614, sub-§7**, as amended by PL 2001, c. 70, §8, is further amended to read:

**7. Part-time students.** The authority may allocate ~~up to 5% of the Maine State Grants~~grants to eligible part-time students. The authority must establish eligibility criteria by rulemaking pursuant to the Maine Administrative Procedure Act.

**Sec. 5. 20-A MRSA §11614, sub-§8** is enacted to read:

**8. Exception for certain public institutions outside the State.** The authority may adopt rules establishing criteria and an application process for making grant awards to students who wish to pursue a course of study available only at a public institution outside the State as part of the New England regional student program offered by the New England Board of Higher Education established by Title 5, section 12004-K, subsection 2. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

**Sec. 6. 20-A MRSA §11616, sub-§2,** as amended by PL 2001, c. 70, §9, is further amended to read:

**2. Period of study.** An eligible ~~full~~-full-time or part-time student may receive a grant for a period not to exceed 150% of the published length of the program in which the student is enrolled10 semesters or the equivalent thereof at the institution that the student is attending, measured in academic years, academic terms, credit hours attempted or clock hours completed, as appropriate.

**Sec. 7. 20-A MRSA §11617, sub-§3** is enacted to read:

**3. Decennial review.** The authority shall, by January 1, 2021, and every 10 years thereafter, conduct a review of the Maine State Grant Program. The authority shall establish a stakeholder group, through a partnership with other appropriate entities, to work together on the review. The review must include, but is not limited to, the following:

- A. A review of the history and efficacy of the program and any necessary changes to the program;
- B. Ideas to enhance the program in light of current and future higher education trends and needs;
- C. Any recommendations on state funding for the program in light of trends in higher education costs and federal and private sector funding for student financial aid; and
- D. Current and future grant and financial aid needs of students and families in the State.

The authority shall submit a written report of the findings of the decennial review by the January 1st the decennial review is due, along with any proposed legislation, to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education and cultural affairs.

## SUMMARY

This bill implements certain recommendations made to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs by the stakeholder group to review the Maine State Grant Program pursuant to Resolve 2011, chapter 14. It modifies the Maine State Grant Program by eliminating reciprocity of the grant with other states; removes the statutory cap of 5% on grant awards to part-time students; removes the grant award differences between public and private institutions; permits the Finance Authority of Maine to establish by rule tiered award amounts; limits grant eligibility to 10 semesters or the equivalent thereof; and allows the authority to address via rulemaking certain exceptions to award denials.

The bill also requires the Finance Authority of Maine to conduct a review of the Maine State Grant Program every 10 years. The authority is required to submit a written report of the findings of the review, including any proposed legislation, to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education and cultural affairs. The first decennial review is due on or before January 1, 2021.