

SHORT TITLE: Higher education; creating Oklahoma Helping
Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) program. Effective date.
Emergency.

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2nd Session of the 46th Legislature (1998)

SENATE BILL NO. 1403

By: Hendrick

AS INTRODUCED

An Act relating to higher education; creating the Oklahoma Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) Act; providing short title; creating the Oklahoma Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) program; stating purposes of program; stating eligibility for program; stating benefits of program; requiring notice of program to students and parents; creating Oklahoma HOPE Teacher Scholarship Program; stating eligibility; authorizing certain loans for certain students; stating amounts of loans; requiring certain commitment; stating conditions for disqualification; creating Oklahoma Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) Trust Fund; stating purposes and uses of fund; requiring adoption of rules for operation of trust fund; providing for codification; providing an effective date; and declaring an emergency.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 2701 of Title 70, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

A. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Oklahoma Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) Act".

B. There is hereby created the Oklahoma Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) Program. The purpose of the program is to ensure that students who meet the criteria set forth in the this act, and who are pursuing studies in this state leading to an associate or baccalaureate degree or who are pursuing studies in a postsecondary vocational-technical program or course offered pursuant to a duly approved cooperative agreement between an area vocational-technical school and an institution of The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education, and who are in good academic standing in the institution of higher education or vocational-technical school in which enrolled, are relieved of many of the financial burdens of paying for postsecondary education.

C. To be eligible to participate in the Oklahoma HOPE Program and to qualify for payment of general enrollment fees, special fees, or tuition and to qualify for book grants for the first semester or other academic unit of postsecondary enrollment, a student shall:

1. Be a resident of this state;

2. Have graduated within the previous three (3) years from a high school accredited by the State Board of Education, or the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics with a minimum 3.0 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale, irrespective of honor points, for all work attempted in grades nine through twelve;

3. Have satisfied the high school curricular requirements adopted by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and required for students participating in the Oklahoma HOPE Program. Students shall also have attained a 3.0 grade point average in the core curriculum courses, irrespective of honor points; provided that students who attended a high school which did not offer all the core curriculum courses shall be allowed to satisfy this requirement by

participating in a program approved by the State Regents for remediation of high school curricular deficiencies;

4. Have satisfied admission standards as determined by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education for first-time-entering students for the appropriate type of institution, or, if attending a private institution, have satisfied admission standards as determined by the private institution; provided, no student participating in the Oklahoma HOPE Program shall be admitted into an institution of higher education by special admission standards; and

5. Have secured admission to, and enrolled in, an institution which is a member of The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education, a postsecondary vocational-technical program offered pursuant to a duly approved cooperative agreement between an area vocational-technical school and an institution of The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education, or a private institution of higher learning located within this state and accredited pursuant to Section 4103 of Title 70 of the Oklahoma Statutes.

D. To retain eligibility while pursuing the program of higher learning in which enrolled, the student shall:

1. Maintain good academic standing and satisfactory academic progress according to standards of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education; and

2. Comply with the standards related to maintenance of eligibility as promulgated by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, which shall include maintaining a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale cumulative grade average.

E. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and the State Board of Vocational and Technical Education shall promulgate regulations relating to maintenance of eligibility under this act by a student.

F. Subject to the availability of funds, the general enrollment fees and special fees for which an eligible Oklahoma HOPE Program

student is obligated at an institution of The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education shall be satisfied by allocation from the Oklahoma HOPE Trust Fund.

G. Subject to the availability of funds, for each eligible Oklahoma HOPE Program student enrolled at a private institution of higher learning located within this state and accredited pursuant to Section 4103 of Title 70 of the Oklahoma Statutes, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall award from the Oklahoma HOPE Trust Fund to the institution, on behalf of the student, an amount equivalent to the amount of general enrollment fees and special fees for which the student would be eligible if the student were enrolled in a comparable program at a comparable institution of The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education. Comparability shall be determined by the State Regents.

H. Subject to the availability of funds, the tuition for any eligible Oklahoma HOPE Program student enrolled in a public postsecondary vocational-technical program or course for the purpose set forth in Section 2602 of this title shall be satisfied by allocation from the Oklahoma HOPE Trust Fund.

I. Satisfaction of general enrollment fees or tuition allowed by this section shall not be allowed for courses or other postsecondary units taken in excess of the requirements for completion of a baccalaureate program, or taken more than five (5) years after the student's first semester of postsecondary enrollment. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education may award the Oklahoma HOPE Program benefits for courses of postsecondary units taken more than five (5) years after the student's first semester of postsecondary enrollment only in hardship circumstances; provided, however, no Oklahoma HOPE Program participant may receive benefits beyond a cumulative time period of five (5) years. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education may establish a maximum limit on the number of courses or other

postsecondary units to which Oklahoma HOPE Program benefits will apply. General enrollment fees and tuition for eligible Oklahoma HOPE Program students enrolled in cooperative programs pursuant to agreements between area vocational-technical schools and institutions of The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education shall be satisfied for both vocational-technical and college work in which enrolled pursuant to such cooperative program.

J. Benefits awarded under the Oklahoma HOPE Program shall be awarded to all eligible applicants without any limitation on the number of awards in any year other than the amount of funds available for the program and the number of eligible applicants. Subject to the provisions of subsection F of this section, if funds are not sufficient to provide awards for all eligible applicants, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall make awards on the basis of need. Provided, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall take into consideration other grants and scholarships received by an eligible applicant when making awards based on need.

K. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education may, at the time an award is made on behalf of an Oklahoma HOPE Program student, set aside funds in the Oklahoma HOPE Trust Fund for the full commitment made to such HOPE Program student. For all academic years, students who have previously received awards under the provisions of the Oklahoma HOPE Act and who have continued at all times to fulfill the requirements for eligibility to receive awards provided pursuant to this program shall be given an absolute priority for continued financial support by the Oklahoma HOPE Program superior to any students who are applying for such benefits for the first time.

L. Each school year, students and parents or guardians in the public schools of this state shall be apprised of the student's opportunity for access to higher learning under the Oklahoma HOPE

Program. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and the State Board of Education shall develop, promote, and coordinate a public awareness program to be utilized in making students and parents aware of the Oklahoma HOPE Program.

M. 1. There is hereby created the Oklahoma HOPE Teacher Scholarship Program. Prospective teachers who are planning to pursue an undergraduate teacher education program, college graduates who are desiring to become qualified to teach, and teachers who are desiring to earn a graduate degree in their major substantive field shall be eligible for forgivable loans through the HOPE program if they have graduated from high school in the top fifteen percent (15%) of their graduating class or maintained or graduated with a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 in their college courses and meet other criteria for eligibility set by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

2. Subject to the availability of funds, loans of Three Thousand Dollars (\$3,000.00) per year for undergraduate work, renewable for up to three (3) additional years, and loans of Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000.00) in total for graduate work shall be awarded to cover costs of general enrollment fees, other fees, books, materials, other services provided by the institutions of higher education, and living expenses.

3. Each undergraduate student, prior to the initial loan, shall have agreed to teach in the public schools of this state for a minimum of three (3) consecutive years upon graduation and licensure as a teacher. Each graduate student, prior to the initial loan, shall have agreed to teach in the public schools of this state for a minimum of one year for each Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00) received. Any loan recipient failing to maintain a 3.0 grade point average, changing to an inappropriate course of study, withdrawing or otherwise leaving school, or failing to meet

requirements for licensure and certification to teach shall be subject to disqualification from the forgivable program.

4. Students who are unable to meet the teaching obligation or who are subject to disqualification from the program shall be liable for all scholarship funds that have been disbursed for which no service has been rendered. The amount owed shall be repayable to the State of Oklahoma plus interest.

SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 3953.2 of Title 70, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

A. There is hereby created a trust fund to be known as the "Oklahoma Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) Trust Fund". The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall be the trustees of said Trust Fund.

B. The State Regents shall utilize said Trust Fund to implement the provisions of this act.

C. The Trust Fund principal shall consist of monies the Legislature appropriates or transfers to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education for the Trust Fund and any monies or assets contributed to the Trust Fund from any other source, public or private.

D. Notwithstanding other provisions of law, income and investment return on Trust Fund principal shall accrue to the Trust Fund for use as provided by authorization of the trustees for the purposes provided in this act. The State Regents may also utilize the Trust Fund principal for the purposes provided in this act. Except as otherwise provided by law, no such income or investment return or principal shall be used for administrative expenses; expenses incurred by the State Regents in the administration of the Trust Fund and of the Oklahoma HOPE Program established by this act shall be paid from monies appropriated to the State Regents coordinating board for their general operating budget.

E. The Regents shall adopt rules for accomplishing transfer of funds from the Oklahoma HOPE Trust Fund to the appropriate institutional Educational and General Operations Revolving Funds, as provided in Section 3901 of Title 70 of the Oklahoma Statutes, to private institutions, and to the appropriate vocational-technical area school district to cover general enrollment fees or tuition for eligible students pursuant to this act. Allocations from the Trust Fund may be made only for the purpose of covering the general enrollment fees or tuition of eligible students. No portion of the Trust Fund may be used or allocated for administrative or operating expenses of any higher education or vocational-technical institution.

SECTION 3. This act shall become effective July 1, 1998.

SECTION 4. It being immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is hereby declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

46-2-2230

PHB