STATE OF OKLAHOMA

1st Session of the 55th Legislature (2015)

HOUSE BILL 1848 By: Inman

AS INTRODUCED

An Act relating to higher education; amending 70 O.S. 2011, Sections 2603, as amended by Section 24, Chapter 11, O.S.L. 2012 and 2605, as amended by Section 26, Chapter 11, O.S.L. 2012 (70 O.S. Supp. 2014, Sections 2603 and 2605), which relate to the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Act; making students in the permanent custody of the Department of Human Services eligible to participate in the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program; specifying eligibility criteria; requiring contact persons to identify certain students and notify the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education; directing the State Regents to enroll the identified students and ensure execution of an agreement; deleting income determination for certain students; modifying agreement provisions; providing an effective date; and declaring an emergency.

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

SECTION 1. AMENDATORY 70 O.S. 2011, Section 2603, as amended by Section 24, Chapter 11, O.S.L. 2012 (70 O.S. Supp. 2014, Section 2603), is amended to read as follows:

Section 2603. A. Except as otherwise provided for in subsection B of this section and elsewhere in this section, to be eligible to participate in the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access

Program and to qualify for an award which includes payment of an amount equivalent to resident tuition or other tuition pursuant to Section 2604 of this title for the first semester or other academic unit of postsecondary enrollment, a student shall:

1. Be a resident of this state or be enrolled in a school district located in this state that serves students who reside in both this state and an adjacent state pursuant to a contract as authorized in Section 5-117.1 of this title;

2. Be a United States citizen or lawfully present in the United States. A student who is not a United States citizen or lawfully present in the United States shall not be eligible to participate in the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program and to qualify for an award notwithstanding the provisions of Section 3242 of this title. The provisions of this paragraph shall not apply to any student who was enrolled in the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program prior to the end of the 2006-2007 school year;

3. Have a record of satisfactory compliance with agreements executed pursuant to Section 2605 of this title;

4. a. 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 2.5 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale for all work attempted in grades nine through twelve,

b. have graduated within the previous three (3) years from a high school not accredited by the State Board of Education with a minimum 2.5 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale for all work attempted in grades nine through twelve and have achieved a composite score of 22 or higher on the ACT test, or

c. have satisfactorily completed within the previous three (3) years an educational program that was provided through a means other than a public or private school and have achieved a composite score of 22 or higher on the ACT test;

5. Have completed the curricular requirements for admission to an institution within The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education and one additional unit or set of competencies in a course that meets college admission requirements. The curriculum requirements shall include two units or sets of competencies in foreign or non-English language or technology courses that meet the college admission requirements and one unit or set of competencies of a fine arts course. Students shall also have attained a 2.5 grade point average in the core curriculum courses. Students who attended a high school which did not offer all the core curriculum courses or students who were educated by other means and were not offered all the core curriculum courses shall be allowed to satisfy this curriculum requirement by participating in a program approved by the

State Regents for remediation of high school curricular deficiencies;

6. 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. No student participating in the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program shall be admitted into an institution of higher education by special admission standards;

7. 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 a technology center 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 this title; and

8. a. have established financial need according to the provisions of subsection D of Section 2605 of this title and standards and provisions promulgated by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education,

   b. if the student was adopted between birth and twelve (12) years of age while in the permanent custody of the Department of Human Services, in the court-ordered

custody of a licensed private nonprofit child-placing agency, or federally recognized Indian tribe, as defined by the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, have established financial need according to the provisions of paragraph 1 of subsection E of Section 2605 of this title and standards and provisions promulgated by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, or

c. if the student was adopted between thirteen (13) and seventeen (17) years of age while in the permanent custody of the Department of Human Services, in the court-ordered custody of a licensed private nonprofit child-placing agency, or federally recognized Indian tribe, as defined by the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, have established financial need according to the provisions of paragraph 2 of subsection E of Section 2605 of this title and standards and provisions promulgated by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

B. 1. A student shall be eligible to participate in the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program and to qualify for an award which includes payment of an amount equivalent to resident tuition or other tuition pursuant to Section 2604 of this title for the first semester or other academic unit of postsecondary enrollment if the student ~~meets all of the following criteria~~ is:

a. ~~is~~ a child of any person killed after January 1, 2000, in the line of duty in any branch of the United States Armed Forces or who died after January 1, 2000, as a result of an injury sustained while in the line of duty in any branch of the United States Armed Forces and the person who was killed or died filed an individual or joint Oklahoma income tax return for the tax year prior to the year during which the person was killed or died, or

b. in the permanent custody of the Department of Human Services at the time the student enrolls in the program or in the permanent custody of the Department of Human Services after completing the tenth grade or in the permanent custody of the Department of Human Services after reaching the age of sixteen (16).

2. A student who is eligible to participate in the program pursuant to paragraph 1 of this subsection shall also be required to meet all of the following criteria:

a. is a resident of this state or is enrolled in a school district located in this state that serves students who reside in both this state and an adjacent state pursuant to a contract as authorized in Section 5-117.1 of this title,

~~c.~~ b. enrolls in an institution within The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education prior to reaching the age of twenty-one (21),

~~d.~~ c. has 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, has satisfied admission standards as determined by the private institution. No student participating in the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program shall be admitted into an institution of higher education by special admission standards,

~~e.~~ d. has 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 a technology center 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 this title, and

~~f.~~ e. executes an agreement pursuant to subsection C of Section 2605 of this title.

~~2.~~ 3. A student who is eligible to participate in the program pursuant to this subsection shall not be required to meet the eligibility requirements set forth in subsection A of this section.

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

1. Achieve a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale or its equivalent for courses taken through the student's sophomore year and achieve a minimum grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale or its equivalent for courses taken during the student's junior year and thereafter. The provisions of this paragraph shall not apply to any student who has received an Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program benefit award prior to the 2012-2013 school year;

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

3. Maintain satisfactory academic progress as required for eligibility for federal Title IV student financial aid programs. The provisions of this paragraph shall become effective for the 2012-2013 school year;

4. Comply with the standards related to maintenance of eligibility as promulgated by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education; and

5. Refrain from conduct that leads to expulsion or suspension of more than one semester from an institution of higher education. A student who violates the provisions of this paragraph shall permanently lose eligibility for program benefits. The provisions of this paragraph shall become effective January 1, 2008.

D. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and the State Board of Career and Technology Education shall promulgate rules relating to maintenance of eligibility under the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Act by a student.

E. It is the intent of the Legislature that students in the ninth grade for the 1992-93 school year who are determined to be eligible Oklahoma Higher Learning Access students pursuant to the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Act shall be the first students eligible for benefits from the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Trust Fund.

F. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education are authorized to study, develop and propose criteria for determining award eligibility based upon the completion of seven (7) semesters of high school coursework by a student.

SECTION 2. AMENDATORY 70 O.S. 2011, Section 2605, as amended by Section 26, Chapter 11, O.S.L. 2012 (70 O.S. Supp. 2014, Section 2605), is amended to read as follows:

Section 2605. A. Each school year, every fifth- through ninth-grade student in the public and private schools of this state and

students who are educated by other means and are in the equivalent of the fifth through ninth grade shall be apprised, together with the parent, custodial parent, or guardian of the student, of the opportunity for access to higher learning under the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access 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 Higher Learning Access Program.

B. 1. On a form provided by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, every public school district shall designate at least one Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program contact person, who shall be a counselor or teacher, at each public school site in this state in which eighth-, ninth- or tenth-grade classes are taught. When requested by the State Regents, the State Board of Education shall assist the State Regents to ensure the designation of contact persons. Private schools shall also designate at least one school official as a contact person. For students who are educated by other means, a parent or guardian or other person approved by the State Regents shall be designated the contact person.

2. The Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program contact person shall be responsible for identifying students enrolled in the public school site or private school who are in the eighth, ninth, and

tenth grade or are between the ages of thirteen (13) and fifteen (15) and who are in the permanent custody of the Department of Human Services. The contact person shall notify the State Regents with the name of each such student. In addition, the contact person shall notify the State Regents with the name of a student who is placed in the permanent custody of the Department of Human Services after completing the tenth grade or after reaching the age of sixteen (16) or a student who is in the permanent custody of the Department of Human Services and enrolls in the school after completing the tenth grade or after reaching the age of sixteen (16). Upon notification, the State Regents shall enroll such students in the program and shall take steps to ensure that the students execute an agreement with provisions as determined by the State Regents.

C. 1. Students who qualify on the basis of financial need according to subsection D or E of this section or who meet the eligibility qualification set forth in subparagraph a of paragraph 1 of subsection B of Section 2603 of this title prior to entering the tenth grade or prior to reaching the age of fifteen (15) and the standards and provisions promulgated by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall be given the opportunity throughout the eighth-, ninth-, and tenth-grade years, for students enrolled in a public or private school, or between the ages of thirteen (13) and fifteen (15), for students who are educated by other means, to enter

into participation in the program by agreeing to, throughout the remainder of their school years or educational program:

a. attend school or an educational program regularly and do homework regularly,

b. refrain from substance abuse,

c. refrain from commission of crimes or delinquent acts,

d. have school work and school records reviewed by mentors designated pursuant to the program,

e. provide information requested by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education or the State Board of Education, and

f. participate in program activities.

2. Students who meet the eligibility qualification set forth in subparagraph a of paragraph 1 of subsection B of Section 2603 of this title after completing the tenth grade or after reaching the age of sixteen (16) shall be given the opportunity prior to reaching the age of twenty-one (21) to enter into participation in the program and shall execute an agreement with provisions as determined by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

3. The contact person shall maintain the agreements, which shall be executed on forms provided by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and managed according to regulations promulgated by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, and the contact person shall monitor compliance of the student with the

terms of the agreement. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education are authorized to process student agreements and verify compliance with the agreements. Students failing to comply with the terms of the agreement shall not be eligible for the awards provided in Section 2604 of this title.

D. Except as otherwise provided for in subsection E of this section and except for students who qualify pursuant to subsection B of Section 2603 of this title, a student shall not be found to be in financial need for purposes of the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program if:

1. At the time the student applies for participation in the Program during the eighth, ninth or tenth grade for students enrolled in a public or private school, or between the ages of thirteen (13) and fifteen (15), for students who are educated by other means, the income from taxable and nontaxable sources of the student's parent(s) exceeds Fifty Thousand Dollars ($50,000.00) per year; and

2. At the time the student begins postsecondary education and prior to receiving any Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program benefit award, the federal adjusted gross income of the student's parent(s) exceeds One Hundred Thousand Dollars ($100,000.00) per year.

The determination of financial qualification as set forth in this paragraph shall be based on the income of the student, not the income of the parent(s), if a student:

a. is determined to be independent of the student's parents for federal financial aid purposes,

b. ~~was in the permanent custody of the Department of Human Services at the time the student enrolled in the program,~~ or

~~c.~~ was in the court-ordered custody of a federally recognized Indian tribe, as defined by the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, at the time the student enrolled in the program.

The provisions of this paragraph shall not apply to any student who has received an Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program benefit award prior to the 2012-2013 school year.

E. 1. A student who was adopted between birth and twelve (12) years of age while in the permanent custody of the Department of Human Services, in the court-ordered custody of a licensed private nonprofit child-placing agency, or federally recognized Indian tribe, as defined by the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, shall not be found to be in financial need for purposes of the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program if at the time the student begins postsecondary education and prior to receiving any Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program benefit award, the federal adjusted gross

income of the student's parent(s) exceeds One Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars ($150,000.00) per year. The provisions of this paragraph shall not apply to any student who has received an Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program benefit award prior to the 2012-2013 school year.

2. A student who was adopted between thirteen (13) and seventeen (17) years of age while in the permanent custody of the Department of Human Services, in the court-ordered custody of a licensed private nonprofit child-placing agency, or federally recognized Indian tribe, as defined by the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, shall not be found to be in financial need for purposes of the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program if at the time the student begins postsecondary education and prior to receiving any Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program benefit award, the federal adjusted gross income of the student's parent(s) exceeds Two Hundred Thousand Dollars ($200,000.00) per year. The provisions of this paragraph shall not apply to any student who has received an Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program benefit award prior to the 2012-2013 school year.

3. Except for students who qualify pursuant to subsection B of Section 2603 of this title, the determination of financial qualification as set forth in this subsection shall be based on the income of the student, not the income of the parent(s), if the student is determined to be independent of the student's parents for

federal financial aid purposes. A determination of financial qualification shall not be required for the student who meets the criteria set forth in this subsection at the time the student applies for participation in the program. The provisions of this paragraph shall not apply to any student who has received an Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program benefit award prior to the 2008-2009 school year.

F. The financial qualification of a student as set forth in subsections D and E of this section shall be certified by the contact person or by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education on the agreement form provided by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. The form shall be retained in the permanent record of the student and a copy forwarded to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

G. ~~Agreements~~ Except for agreements executed pursuant to paragraph 2 of subsection B of this section, agreements shall be witnessed by the parent, custodial parent, or guardian of the student, who shall further agree to:

1. Assist the student in achieving compliance with the agreements;

2. Confer, when requested to do so, with the school contact person, other school personnel, and program mentors;

3. Provide information requested by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education or the State Board of Education; and

4. Assist the student in completing forms and reports required for program participation, making applications to institutions and schools of higher learning, and filing applications for student grants and scholarships.

H. Students who are enrolled in a school district located in this state that serves students who reside in both this state and an adjacent state pursuant to a contract as authorized in Section 5-117.1 of this title, are in the eleventh and twelfth grades during the 2006-2007 school year, and who were denied participation in the program shall be allowed to enter or reenter into participation in the program by entering into agreements as set forth in subsections C and D of this section by June 1, 2008.

I. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall promulgate rules for the determination of student compliance with agreements made pursuant to this section.

J. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall designate personnel to coordinate tracking of program records for the years when students participating in the program are still in the schools or are being educated by other means, provide staff development for contact persons in the schools, and provide liaison with the State Board of Education and local organizations and individuals participating in the program.

K. The school district where an Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program student is enrolled when the student begins participation in

the program and any subsequent school district where the student enrolls shall forward information regarding participation by the student in the program to a school to which the student transfers upon the request of the school for the records of the student.

L. Students participating in the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program shall provide their social security number or their student identification number used by their school to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. The Regents shall keep the numbers confidential and use them only for administrative purposes.

SECTION 3. This act shall become effective July 1, 2015.

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.

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