

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

1st Session of the 56th Legislature (2017)

HOUSE BILL 1459

By: Echols

AS INTRODUCED

An act relating to schools; amending 70 O.S. 2011, Section 13-101.2, as last amended by Section 1, Chapter 342, O.S.L. 2014 (70 O.S. Supp. 2016, Section 13-101.2), which relates to the Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program; providing exemption for certain student to be awarded Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarship; and providing an effective date.

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

SECTION 1. AMENDATORY 70 O.S. 2011, Section 13-101.2, as last amended by Section 1, Chapter 342, O.S.L. 2014 (70 O.S. Supp. 2016, Section 13-101.2), is amended to read as follows:

Section 13-101.2 A. There is hereby created the Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program. The Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program is established to provide a scholarship to a private school of choice for students with disabilities for whom an individualized education program (IEP) in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has been developed at any time

1 prior to notifying the State Department of Education of the intent  
2 to participate in the Program and the IEP is in effect at the time  
3 the request for a scholarship is received by the State Department of  
4 Education. Scholarships shall be awarded beginning with the 2010-  
5 2011 school year.

6 B. The parent or legal guardian of a public school student with  
7 a disability may exercise their parental option and request to have  
8 a Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarship awarded for the child to enroll  
9 in and attend a private school in accordance with this section and  
10 the scholarship shall be awarded if:

11 1. The student has spent the prior school year in attendance at  
12 a public school in this state. For purposes of this section, "prior  
13 school year in attendance" means that the student was enrolled in  
14 and reported by a school district for funding purposes during the  
15 preceding school year regardless of whether or not the student had  
16 an IEP at the time the student was counted for funding purposes. A  
17 student who is a child of a member of the United States Armed Forces  
18 who transfers to a school in this state from out of state or from a  
19 foreign country pursuant to a permanent change of station orders of  
20 the parent shall be exempt from the requirements of this paragraph  
21 but shall be required to meet all other eligibility requirements to  
22 participate as provided for in this section. A student who has been  
23 provided services under an Individual Family Service Plan through  
24 the SoonerStart program and during transition was evaluated and

1 determined to be eligible for school district services shall be  
2 exempt from the requirements of this paragraph but shall be required  
3 to meet all other eligibility requirements to participate as  
4 provided for in this section. A student who was adopted while in  
5 the permanent custody of the Department of Human Services shall be  
6 exempt from the requirements of this paragraph but shall be required  
7 to meet all other eligibility requirements to participate as  
8 provided for in this section; and

9       2. The parent or legal guardian has obtained acceptance for  
10 admission of the student to a private school that is eligible for  
11 the program as provided in subsection H of this section and has  
12 notified the State Department of Education of the request for a  
13 scholarship. Requests to participate in the program made after  
14 December 1 shall be granted, but funding for scholarships requested  
15 after December 1 shall not be available until the beginning of the  
16 next school year. The request shall be through a communication  
17 directly to the Department in a manner that creates a written or  
18 electronic record of the request and the date of receipt of the  
19 request. The Department shall notify the school district upon  
20 receipt of the request. For purposes of continuity of educational  
21 choice, the scholarship shall remain in force until the student  
22 returns to a public school, graduates from high school or reaches  
23 the age of twenty-two (22), whichever occurs first. At any time,  
24 the parent or legal guardian of the student may remove the student

1 from the private school and place the student in another private  
2 school that is eligible for the program as provided in subsection H  
3 of this section or place the student in a public school.

4 C. A student shall be eligible for a scholarship if the parent  
5 or legal guardian of the student made a request for a scholarship  
6 for the 2010-2011 school year and the student transferred to an  
7 eligible private school but was subsequently denied a scholarship  
8 because the student did not have an IEP in effect on October 1,  
9 2009, but did meet all other eligibility requirements as set forth  
10 in the Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarships for Students with  
11 Disabilities Program Act.

12 D. A student shall not be eligible for a Lindsey Nicole Henry  
13 Scholarship if the student is not having regular and direct contact  
14 with the private school teachers at the physical location of the  
15 private school.

16 E. School districts shall notify the parent or legal guardian  
17 of a public school student with a disability of all options  
18 available pursuant to this section and inform the parent or legal  
19 guardian of the availability of information about the program from  
20 the State Department of Education through the toll-free telephone  
21 number or website. The notification shall be provided with or  
22 included in the copy of the "Parents Rights in Special Education:  
23 Notice of Procedural Safeguards" document given to parents at least  
24 annually or as otherwise required by law.

1 F. 1. Acceptance of a Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarship shall  
2 have the same effect as a parental revocation of consent to service  
3 pursuant to 20 U.S.C., Sections 1414(a)(1)(D) and 1414(C) of the  
4 IDEA.

5 2. Upon acceptance of a Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarship, the  
6 parent or legal guardian shall assume full financial responsibility  
7 for the education of the student, including but not limited to  
8 transportation to and from the private school.

9 G. If the parent or legal guardian requests a Lindsey Nicole  
10 Henry Scholarship and the student is accepted by the private school  
11 pending the availability of a space for the student, the parent or  
12 legal guardian of the student shall notify the State Department of  
13 Education before entering the private school and before December 1  
14 in order to be eligible for the scholarship during the school year  
15 when a space becomes available for the student in the private  
16 school. If notification is made after December 1, payment of the  
17 scholarship shall not begin until the next school year.

18 H. To be eligible to participate in the Lindsey Nicole Henry  
19 Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program, a private  
20 school shall notify the State Department of Education of its intent  
21 to participate. The notice shall specify the grade levels and  
22 services that the private school has available for students with  
23 disabilities who are participating in the scholarship program. The  
24 State Department of Education shall approve a private school as

1 eligible to participate in the scholarship program upon  
2 determination that the private school:

3 1. Meets the accreditation requirements set by the State Board  
4 of Education or another accrediting association approved by the  
5 State Board of Education;

6 2. Demonstrates fiscal soundness by having been in operation  
7 for one (1) school year or providing the State Department of  
8 Education with a statement by a certified public accountant  
9 confirming that the private school desiring to participate is  
10 insured and the owner or owners have sufficient capital or credit to  
11 operate the school for the upcoming year by serving the number of  
12 students anticipated with expected revenues from tuition and other  
13 sources that may be reasonably expected. In lieu of a statement, a  
14 surety bond or letter of credit for the amount equal to the  
15 scholarship funds for any quarter may be filed with the Department;

16 3. Complies with the antidiscrimination provisions of 42  
17 U.S.C., Section 2000d;

18 4. Meets state and local health and safety laws and codes;

19 5. Will be academically accountable to the parent or legal  
20 guardian for meeting the educational needs of the student;

21 6. Employs or contracts with teachers who hold baccalaureate or  
22 higher degrees, or have at least three (3) years of teaching  
23 experience in public or private schools, or have special skills,  
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1 knowledge, or expertise that qualifies them to provide instruction  
2 in subjects taught;

3 7. Complies with all state laws relating to general regulation  
4 of private schools; and

5 8. Adheres to the tenets of its published disciplinary  
6 procedures prior to the expulsion of a scholarship student.

7 I. 1. Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarship Program participants  
8 shall comply with the following:

9 a. the parent or legal guardian shall select the private  
10 school from the schools approved for eligibility  
11 pursuant to subsection H of this section and apply for  
12 the admission of the child,

13 b. the parent or legal guardian shall request the  
14 scholarship no later than December 1 of the school  
15 year during which the scholarship is requested,

16 c. any student participating in the scholarship program  
17 shall attend throughout the school year, unless  
18 excused by the school for illness or other good cause,  
19 and shall comply fully with the code of conduct for  
20 the school,

21 d. the parent or legal guardian shall fully comply with  
22 the parental involvement requirements of the private  
23 school, unless excused by the school for illness or  
24 other good cause, and

1           e.    upon issuance of a scholarship warrant, the parent or  
2                legal guardian to whom the warrant is made shall  
3                restrictively endorse the warrant to the private  
4                school for deposit into the account of the private  
5                school. The parent or legal guardian may not  
6                designate any entity or individual associated with the  
7                private school as the attorney in fact for the parent  
8                or legal guardian to endorse a warrant. A parent or  
9                legal guardian who fails to comply with this  
10              subparagraph shall forfeit the scholarship.

11          2. A participant who fails to comply with this subsection  
12          forfeits the scholarship.

13          J. Provisions governing payment of a Lindsey Nicole Henry  
14          Scholarship shall be as follows:

15          1. The State Department of Education shall calculate the total  
16          cost of all scholarships for all eligible students in the state.  
17          The State Department of Education shall then reserve or retain from  
18          the total amount appropriated to the State Board of Education for  
19          State Aid purposes and any other revenue available for allocation  
20          for State Aid purposes the total cost for all scholarship payments;

21          2. The maximum scholarship granted for an eligible student with  
22          disabilities shall be a calculated amount equivalent to the total  
23          State Aid factors for the applicable school year multiplied by the  
24          grade and disability weights generated by that student for the

1 applicable school year. The disability weights used in calculating  
2 the scholarship amount shall include all disability weights which  
3 correspond to the disabilities included in the multidisciplinary  
4 evaluation and eligibility group summary for the student at the time  
5 the request for a scholarship is made by the parent or legal  
6 guardian. The maximum scholarship amount shall be calculated by the  
7 State Board of Education for each year the student is participating  
8 in the scholarship program;

9       3. The amount of the scholarship shall be the amount calculated  
10 in paragraph 2 of this subsection or the amount of tuition and fees  
11 for the private school, whichever is less, minus up to two and one-  
12 half percent (2 1/2%) of the scholarship amount which may be  
13 retained by the State Department of Education as a fee for  
14 administrative services rendered. The amount of any assessment fee  
15 required by the private school and the amount associated with  
16 providing services and therapies to address the disabilities of the  
17 student may be paid from the total amount of the scholarship. The  
18 amount of the scholarship shall be prorated to reflect the number of  
19 days remaining in the current school year, if the scholarship  
20 request is granted after the beginning of the school year;

21       4. The State Department of Education shall notify the private  
22 school of the amount of the scholarship within ten (10) days after  
23 receiving the request for a scholarship, when the total State Aid  
24 factors have been determined for the current fiscal year. The

1 initial payment shall be made after the Department verifies  
2 admission acceptance and enrollment. Quarterly payments shall be  
3 made upon verification of continued enrollment and attendance at the  
4 private school. Payment shall be made by the Department with an  
5 individual warrant made payable to the parent or legal guardian of  
6 the student and mailed by the Department to the private school that  
7 the parent or legal guardian chooses. The parent or legal guardian  
8 shall restrictively endorse the warrant to the private school for  
9 deposit into the account of the private school;

10 5. The State Department of Education shall not be responsible  
11 for any additional costs associated with special education and  
12 related services incurred by the private school for the student  
13 including the cost of teachers, equipment, material, and special  
14 costs associated with the special education class;

15 6. The State Department of Education shall establish a toll-  
16 free telephone number or website that provides parents or legal  
17 guardians and private schools with information about the program;

18 7. The State Department of Education shall require an annual,  
19 notarized, sworn compliance statement by participating private  
20 schools certifying compliance with state laws and shall retain all  
21 records received from a participating private school; and

22 8. The State Department of Education shall cross-check the list  
23 of participating scholarship students with the public school  
24 enrollments prior to each scholarship payment to avoid duplication.

1 K. 1. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction shall  
2 deny, suspend, or revoke the participation of a private school in  
3 the scholarship program if it is determined that the private school  
4 has failed to comply with the provisions of this section. However,  
5 in instances in which the noncompliance is correctable within a  
6 reasonable amount of time and in which the health, safety, or  
7 welfare of the students is not threatened, the Superintendent may  
8 issue a notice of noncompliance which shall provide the private  
9 school with a time frame within which to provide evidence of  
10 compliance prior to taking action to suspend or revoke participation  
11 in the scholarship program.

12 2. If the Superintendent intends to deny, suspend, or revoke  
13 the participation of a private school in the scholarship program,  
14 the Department shall notify the private school of the proposed  
15 action in writing by certified mail and regular mail to the private  
16 school's address of record with the Department. The Department  
17 shall also notify any parents or legal guardians of scholarship  
18 students attending the private school. The notification shall  
19 include the reasons for the proposed action and notice of the  
20 timelines and procedures set forth in this subsection.

21 3. The private school that is adversely affected by the  
22 proposed action shall have fifteen (15) days from receipt of the  
23 notice of proposed action to file with the Department a request for  
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1 an administrative hearing proceeding pursuant to the Administrative  
2 Procedures Act.

3 4. Upon receipt of a request for a hearing, the State Board of  
4 Education shall commence a hearing within sixty (60) days after the  
5 receipt of the formal written request and enter an order within  
6 thirty (30) days after the hearing.

7 5. The Board may immediately suspend payment of scholarship  
8 funds if it is determined that there is probable cause to believe  
9 that there is an imminent threat to the health, safety, or welfare  
10 of the students or fraudulent activity on the part of the private  
11 school.

12 L. No liability shall arise on the part of the state, the State  
13 Board of Education, the State Department of Education or a school  
14 district based on the award or use of any scholarship provided  
15 through the Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarships for Students with  
16 Disabilities Program.

17 M. The inclusion of private schools within options available to  
18 public school students in Oklahoma shall not expand the regulatory  
19 authority of the state or any school district to impose any  
20 additional regulation of private schools beyond those reasonably  
21 necessary to enforce the requirements expressly set forth in this  
22 section.

23 N. If the State Department of Education determines that a  
24 school district prior to the effective date of this act has failed

1 to comply with the provisions of the Lindsey Nicole Henry  
2 Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program Act and has  
3 failed to make full or partial scholarship payments for eligible  
4 students, the Department shall have authority to reduce the amount  
5 of State Aid allocated to the school district or require the school  
6 district to make repayment to the Department of State Aid  
7 allocations in an amount equal to the amount of scholarship payments  
8 the school district failed to make. The Department shall make  
9 payment to the parent or legal guardian in the amount the school  
10 district failed to make in the manner as provided for in subsection  
11 J of this section.

12 SECTION 2. This act shall become effective November 1, 2017.

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