

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2nd Session of the 60th Legislature (2026)

HOUSE BILL 2982

By: Banning

AS INTRODUCED

An Act relating to the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program; amending 70 O.S. 2021, Section 2605, as last amended by Section 2, Chapter 485, O.S.L. 2025 (70 O.S. Supp. 2025, Section 2605), which relates to student agreements; expanding eligibility of program to children of certified classroom teachers who graduated during the 2024-2025 school year; and declaring an emergency.

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

SECTION 1. AMENDATORY 70 O.S. 2021, Section 2605, as last amended by Section 2, Chapter 485, O.S.L. 2025 (70 O.S. Supp. 2025, Section 2605), is amended to read as follows:

Section 2605. A. Each school year, every fifth- through eleventh-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 eleventh 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,

1 promote, and coordinate a public awareness program to be utilized in
2 making students and parents aware of the Oklahoma Higher Learning
3 Access Program.

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

15 C. 1. Students who qualify on the basis of financial need
16 according to subsection D or E of this section or who meet the
17 eligibility qualification set forth in subparagraph a of paragraph 1
18 of subsection B of Section 2603 of this title no later than December
19 31 of their twelfth-grade year or prior to reaching the age of
20 seventeen (17) and who qualify on the basis of the standards and
21 provisions promulgated by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher
22 Education shall be given the opportunity throughout the eighth-,
23 ninth-, tenth-, and eleventh-grade years and no later than December
24 31 of the twelfth-grade year, for students enrolled in a public or

1 private school, or between the ages of thirteen (13) and seventeen
2 (17), for students who are educated by other means, to enter into
3 participation in the program by agreeing to, throughout the
4 remainder of their school years or educational program:

- 5 a. attend school or an educational program regularly and
6 do homework regularly,
- 7 b. refrain from substance abuse,
- 8 c. refrain from commission of crimes or delinquent acts,
- 9 d. have school work and school records reviewed by
10 mentors designated pursuant to the program,
- 11 e. provide information requested by the Oklahoma State
12 Regents for Higher Education or the State Board of
13 Education, and
- 14 f. participate in program activities.

15 2. Students who meet the eligibility qualification set forth in
16 subparagraph a of paragraph 1 of subsection B of Section 2603 of
17 this title after December 31 of their twelfth-grade year or after
18 reaching the age of eighteen (18) shall be given the opportunity
19 prior to reaching the age of twenty-one (21) to enter into
20 participation in the program and shall execute an agreement with
21 provisions as determined by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher
22 Education.

23 3. The contact person shall maintain the agreements, which
24 shall be executed on forms provided by the Oklahoma State Regents

1 for Higher Education and managed according to regulations
2 promulgated by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, and
3 the contact person shall monitor compliance of the student with the
4 terms of the agreement. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher
5 Education are authorized to process student agreements and verify
6 compliance with the agreements. Students failing to comply with the
7 terms of the agreement shall not be eligible for the awards provided
8 in Section 2604 of this title.

9 4. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education may provide
10 an exception to the age limits provided for in paragraphs 1 and 2 of
11 this subsection pursuant to subsection L of this section.

12 5. Notwithstanding the provisions of Sections 5-132 and 5-132.1
13 of this title, a student who is age twenty-one (21) or older shall
14 not be eligible to enter into participation in the program.

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

20 1. Beginning with eighth-, ninth-, or tenth-grade students who
21 are enrolled in a public or private school or students between the
22 ages of thirteen (13) and fifteen (15) who are educated by other
23 means who apply for participation in the program in the 2017-2018
24

1 school year, the federal adjusted gross income of the student's
2 parent(s) exceeds Fifty-five Thousand Dollars (\$55,000.00) per year;

3 2. Beginning with eighth-, ninth-, tenth-, or eleventh-grade
4 students who are enrolled in a public or private school or students
5 between the ages of thirteen (13) and sixteen (16) who are educated
6 by other means who apply for participation in the program in the
7 2021-2022 school year, the federal adjusted gross income of the
8 student's parent(s) exceeds Sixty Thousand Dollars (\$60,000.00) per
9 year;

10 3. Beginning with eighth-, ninth-, tenth-, or eleventh-grade
11 students who are enrolled in a public or private school or students
12 between the ages of thirteen (13) and sixteen (16) who are educated
13 by other means who apply for participation in the program in the
14 2022-2023 school year:

15 a. the federal adjusted gross income of the student's
16 parent(s), who have two or fewer dependent children,
17 exceeds Sixty Thousand Dollars (\$60,000.00) per year,

18 b. the federal adjusted gross income of the student's
19 parent(s), who have three or four dependent children,
20 exceeds Seventy Thousand Dollars (\$70,000.00) per
21 year, or

22 c. the federal adjusted gross income of the student's
23 parent(s), who have five or more dependent children,
24 exceeds Eighty Thousand Dollars (\$80,000.00) per year;

1 4. Beginning with eighth-, ninth-, tenth-, or eleventh-grade
2 students or twelfth-grade students no later than December 31 of
3 their twelfth-grade year who are enrolled in a public or private
4 school or students between the ages of thirteen (13) and seventeen
5 (17) who are educated by other means who apply for participation in
6 the program in the 2025-2026 school year:

7 a. the federal adjusted gross income of the student's
8 parent(s), who have two or fewer dependent children,
9 exceeds Sixty Thousand Dollars (\$60,000.00) per year,

10 b. the federal adjusted gross income of the student's
11 parent(s), who have three or four dependent children,
12 exceeds Seventy Thousand Dollars (\$70,000.00) per
13 year, or

14 c. the federal adjusted gross income of the student's
15 parent(s), who have five or more dependent children,
16 exceeds Eighty Thousand Dollars (\$80,000.00) per year;

17 5. Beginning with the 2018-2019 academic year, prior to
18 receiving any Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program benefit award
19 for any year during which the student is enrolled in an institution
20 which is a member of The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education,
21 a postsecondary vocational-technical program offered by a technology
22 center school that meets the requirements to be eligible for federal
23 student financial aid, or a private institution of higher learning
24 located within this state and accredited pursuant to Section 4103 of

1 this title, the federal adjusted gross income of the student's
2 parent(s) exceeds One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000.00) per
3 year.

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

- 7 a. is determined to be independent of the student's
8 parents for federal financial aid purposes,
- 9 b. was in the permanent custody of the Department of
10 Human Services at the time the student enrolled in the
11 program, or
- 12 c. was in the court-ordered custody of a federally
13 recognized Indian tribe, as defined by the federal
14 Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, at the time the
15 student enrolled in the program.

16 The provisions of this paragraph shall apply to any student who
17 has received an Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program benefit
18 award after the 2017-2018 school year; and

19 6. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall review
20 the determination of financial qualification as set forth in
21 paragraphs 1, 2, 3, and 4 of this subsection if the income from
22 taxable and nontaxable sources of the student's parent(s) includes
23 income received from nontaxable military benefits or income received
24 from the federal Social Security Administration due to the death or

1 disability of the student's parent(s). If the income from taxable
2 and nontaxable sources of the student's parent(s), excluding income
3 received from nontaxable military benefits or income received from
4 the federal Social Security Administration due to the death or
5 disability of the student's parent(s), does not exceed the
6 limitations set forth by paragraphs 1, 2, 3, and 4 of this
7 subsection, the student shall be determined to have met the
8 financial qualification set forth in paragraphs 1, 2, 3, and 4 of
9 this subsection.

10 E. 1. A student who was adopted between birth and twelve (12)
11 years of age while in the permanent custody of the Department of
12 Human Services, in the court-ordered custody of a licensed private
13 nonprofit child-placing agency, or federally recognized Indian
14 tribe, as defined by the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978,
15 shall not be found to be in financial need for purposes of the
16 Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program if at the time the student
17 begins postsecondary education and prior to receiving any Oklahoma
18 Higher Learning Access Program benefit award, the federal adjusted
19 gross income of the student's parent(s) exceeds One Hundred Fifty
20 Thousand Dollars (\$150,000.00) per year. The provisions of this
21 paragraph shall not apply to any student who has received an
22 Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program benefit award prior to the
23 2012-2013 school year.

1 2. A student who was adopted between thirteen (13) and
2 seventeen (17) years of age while in the permanent custody of the
3 Department of Human Services, in the court-ordered custody of a
4 licensed private nonprofit child-placing agency, or federally
5 recognized Indian tribe, as defined by the federal Indian Child
6 Welfare Act of 1978, shall not be found to be in financial need for
7 purposes of the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program if at the
8 time the student begins postsecondary education and prior to
9 receiving any Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program benefit award,
10 the federal adjusted gross income of the student's parent(s) exceeds
11 Two Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$200,000.00) per year. The provisions
12 of this paragraph shall not apply to any student who has received an
13 Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program benefit award prior to the
14 2012-2013 school year.

15 3. A student who was placed in the custody of the Department of
16 Human Services at any time during the eighth, ninth, tenth, or
17 eleventh grade and enrolls in the program no later than his or her
18 official date of high school graduation shall not be found to be in
19 financial need for purposes of the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access
20 Program if the federal adjusted gross income of the student exceeds
21 Sixty Thousand Dollars (\$60,000.00) per year.

22 4. Except for students who qualify pursuant to subsection B of
23 Section 2603 of this title, the determination of financial
24 qualification as set forth in this subsection shall be based on the

1 income of the student, not the income of the parent(s), if the
2 student is determined to be independent of the student's parent(s)
3 for federal financial aid purposes. A determination of financial
4 qualification shall not be required for the student who meets the
5 criteria set forth in this subsection at the time the student
6 applies for participation in the program. The provisions of this
7 paragraph shall not apply to any student who has received an
8 Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program benefit award prior to the
9 2008-2009 school year.

10 5. a. A student who is the child of a certified classroom
11 teacher at the time the student applies for
12 participation in the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access
13 Program shall not be found to be in financial need for
14 the purposes of the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access
15 Program if, ~~beginning with eighth-, ninth-, tenth-, or~~
16 ~~eleventh-grade students or twelfth-grade students no~~
17 ~~later than December 31 of their twelfth-grade year~~
18 ~~who are enrolled in a public or private school or~~
19 ~~students between thirteen (13) and seventeen (17)~~
20 ~~years of age who are educated by other means who apply~~
21 ~~for participation in the program in the 2025-2026~~
22 ~~school year,~~ the household income of the student's
23 parent(s) is equal to or greater than seven hundred
24 percent (700%) of the federal poverty level (FPL).

1 For purposes of this subparagraph, students eligible
2 to apply for participation under this subparagraph
3 shall include:

4 (1) students who graduated during the 2024-2025
5 school year if the student would have
6 otherwise been eligible for participation
7 under this subparagraph on July 1, 2025, had
8 the student not graduated and applies for
9 participation in the program on or before
10 July 1, 2026,

11 (2) beginning with the 2025-2026 school year,
12 eighth-, ninth-, tenth-, or eleventh-grade
13 students or twelfth-grade students who apply
14 for participation no later than December 31
15 of their twelfth-grade year who are enrolled
16 in a public or private school, or

17 (3) beginning with the 2025-2026 school year,
18 students between thirteen (13) and seventeen
19 (17) years of age who are educated by other
20 means who apply for participation.

21 b. Prior to receiving any Oklahoma Higher Learning Access
22 Program benefit award for any year during which the
23 student is enrolled in an institution that is a member
24 of The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education, a

1 postsecondary vocational-technical program offered by
2 a technology center school that meets the eligibility
3 requirements for federal student financial aid, or a
4 private institution of higher learning located within
5 this state and accredited pursuant to Section 4103 of
6 this title, the household income of the parent(s) of a
7 student who qualifies pursuant to this paragraph shall
8 not be equal to or greater than seven hundred percent
9 (700%) of the federal poverty level (FPL).

10 c. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall
11 verify the full-time employment status of the
12 student's parent(s) prior to a student who qualifies
13 pursuant to this paragraph receiving any Oklahoma
14 Higher Learning Access Program benefit award.

15 d. For the purposes of this paragraph, "certified
16 classroom teacher" means a certified, full-time
17 classroom teacher who has been employed as a teacher
18 in a public school district classroom in this state
19 for a minimum of ten (10) years prior to his or her
20 child applying for participation in the program. The
21 teacher is not required to have been employed by the
22 same public school district for ten (10) consecutive
23 years. Certified classroom teacher does not mean a
24 certified teacher who is employed as a school district

1 superintendent, principal, or any other position
2 within the administration of a public school district
3 when his or her child applies for participation in the
4 program or prior to his or her child receiving any
5 Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program benefit award.

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

13 G. Agreements shall be witnessed by the parent, custodial
14 parent, or guardian of the student, who shall further agree to:

- 15 1. Assist the student in achieving compliance with the
16 agreements;
- 17 2. Confer, when requested to do so, with the school contact
18 person, other school personnel, and program mentors;
- 19 3. Provide information requested by the Oklahoma State Regents
20 for Higher Education or the State Board of Education; and
- 21 4. Assist the student in completing forms and reports required
22 for program participation, making applications to institutions and
23 schools of higher learning, and filing applications for student
24 grants and scholarships.

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

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

11 J. The school district where an Oklahoma Higher Learning Access
12 Program student is enrolled when the student begins participation in
13 the program and any subsequent school district where the student
14 enrolls shall forward information regarding participation by the
15 student in the program to a school to which the student transfers
16 upon the request of the school for the records of the student.

17 K. Students participating in the Oklahoma Higher Learning
18 Access Program shall provide their Social Security number or their
19 student identification number used by their school to the Oklahoma
20 State Regents for Higher Education. The State Regents shall keep
21 the numbers confidential and use them only for administrative
22 purposes.

23 L. The State Regents may provide an exception to the age limits
24 provided for in paragraphs 1 and 2 of subsection C of this section

1 to a student due to hardship circumstances and allow an application
2 to the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program for twelfth-grade
3 students enrolled in a public or private school and students who are
4 educated by other means and are in the equivalent of twelfth grade.
5 Provided, however, the exception due to hardship circumstances shall
6 not apply to:

7 1. A student enrolled in a public or private school after the
8 student's official date of high school graduation;

9 2. A student educated by other means who is age nineteen (19)
10 or older; or

11 3. Any student who is age twenty-one (21) or older.

12 The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall promulgate
13 rules to implement the provisions of this subsection.

14 SECTION 2. It being immediately necessary for the preservation
15 of the public peace, health or safety, an emergency is hereby
16 declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and
17 be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

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