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SENATE BILL 84

53RD LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2018

INTRODUCED BY

Bill Tallman

AN ACT

RELATING TO HIGHER EDUCATION; ENACTING THE NEW MEXICO RECONNECT SCHOLARSHIP ACT; PROVIDING CERTAIN STUDENTS WITH TUITION SCHOLARSHIPS TO ATTEND COMMUNITY COLLEGE; MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

SECTION 1. [NEW MATERIAL] SHORT TITLE.--This act may be cited as the "New Mexico Reconnect Scholarship Act".

SECTION 2. [NEW MATERIAL] DEFINITIONS.--As used in the New Mexico Reconnect Scholarship Act:

A. "community college" means a branch community college of a four-year state educational institution, a two-year state educational institution or a community college or technical and vocational institute established pursuant to Chapter 21, Article 13 or 16 NMSA 1978, respectively;

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1 B. "department" means the higher education
2 department; and

3 C. "student" means a resident of New Mexico who is
4 enrolled or will be enrolled in a community college in New
5 Mexico at the time the scholarship is awarded.

6 **SECTION 3. [NEW MATERIAL] CONDITIONS FOR ELIGIBILITY.--A**

7 New Mexico reconnect scholarship may be awarded to an
8 individual who:

9 A. complies with the rules adopted by the
10 department pursuant to the New Mexico Reconnect Scholarship
11 Act;

12 B. is a resident of New Mexico and has been a
13 resident for at least the past year;

14 C. submits to the intended public post-secondary
15 educational institution a completed:

16 (1) New Mexico reconnect scholarship
17 application form developed by the public post-secondary
18 educational institution or the department; or

19 (2) free application for federal student aid
20 provided pursuant to the federal Higher Education Act of 1965;

21 D. is:

22 (1) at least twenty-four years old;

23 (2) married;

24 (3) a graduate or professional student;

25 (4) a veteran;

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1 (5) a member of the United States armed
2 forces;

3 (6) an orphan;

4 (7) a ward of the court;

5 (8) a person who has at least one legal
6 dependent other than a spouse; or

7 (9) an emancipated minor;

8 E. has not earned an associate's, baccalaureate,
9 master's or doctorate degree; and

10 F. has an adjusted gross income of less than
11 thirty-six thousand dollars (\$36,000) per year.

12 SECTION 4. [NEW MATERIAL] SCHOLARSHIP AUTHORIZED--
13 ADMINISTRATION--PREFERENCE IN SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS.--

14 A. The department shall administer the New Mexico
15 Reconnect Scholarship Act and shall adopt all rules necessary
16 to administer that act.

17 B. Scholarships shall be awarded to qualified
18 applicants. Qualifications and preferences in scholarship
19 awards shall be determined by the department pursuant to its
20 adopted rules.

21 SECTION 5. [NEW MATERIAL] DURATION OF SCHOLARSHIP.--Each
22 scholarship is for a period of one academic semester. A
23 scholarship may be renewed until the award recipient has
24 received four consecutive semester scholarship awards or until
25 the student graduates from an eligible community college with

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1 an associate's degree or certificate, whichever occurs first.

2 SECTION 6. [NEW MATERIAL] TERMINATION OF SCHOLARSHIP.--A

3 New Mexico reconnect scholarship awarded pursuant to the New
4 Mexico Reconnect Scholarship Act is terminated upon occurrence
5 of:

6 A. withdrawal of the award recipient from the
7 community college;

8 B. failure of the award recipient to maintain a
9 minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.0 on a scale of 4.0
10 in the immediately preceding semester;

11 C. failure to be enrolled in at least nine hours of
12 course credits per semester;

13 D. failure to complete at least six hours of course
14 credits in a semester in which the student received a
15 scholarship pursuant to the New Mexico Reconnect Scholarship
16 Act;

17 E. failure to maintain continuous enrollment in
18 classes leading to an associate's degree or certificate; or

19 F. substantial noncompliance by the award recipient
20 with the New Mexico Reconnect Scholarship Act or the rules
21 adopted by the department pursuant to that act.

22 SECTION 7. [NEW MATERIAL] ORDER OF SCHOLARSHIP AWARD.--

23 Subject to the amount of money in the New Mexico reconnect
24 scholarship fund, the amount of New Mexico reconnect
25 scholarship awards shall not exceed the cost of tuition and

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1 mandatory fees charged to all students for coursework leading
2 to completion of the eligible program of study at the eligible
3 community college attended less all other aid provided to
4 students, which aid shall be credited first to tuition and
5 mandatory fees.

6 SECTION 8. [NEW MATERIAL] FUND CREATED.--The "New Mexico
7 reconnect scholarship fund" is created in the state treasury.
8 Money in the fund is appropriated to the department to
9 administer the New Mexico Reconnect Scholarship Act. Money in
10 the fund shall revert to the general fund at the end of a
11 fiscal year. Money in the fund shall be disbursed on warrants
12 signed by the secretary of finance and administration pursuant
13 to vouchers signed by the secretary of higher education or the
14 secretary's authorized representative.

15 SECTION 9. APPROPRIATION.--Five million eight hundred
16 thousand dollars (\$5,800,000) is appropriated from the general
17 fund to the New Mexico reconnect scholarship fund for
18 expenditure in fiscal year 2019 to carry out the provisions of
19 the New Mexico Reconnect Scholarship Act. Up to seventy-five
20 thousand dollars (\$75,000) of the appropriation may be used by
21 the higher education department for administrative purposes.
22 Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of
23 fiscal year 2019 shall revert to the general fund.

24 SECTION 10. EFFECTIVE DATE.--The effective date of the
25 provisions of this act is July 1, 2018.

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