

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2015**

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**HOUSE BILL 129
Committee Substitute Favorable 3/17/15**

Short Title: High Achieving Tuition Scholarships.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

March 4, 2015

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO CREATE THE HIGH ACHIEVING TUITION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
3 FOR SCHOLARSHIPS FOR TOP-PERFORMING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
4 ATTENDING NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGES.

5 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

6 **SECTION 1.** Purpose of Program. – There is created the High Achieving Tuition
7 Scholarship Program. The purposes of the High Achieving Tuition Scholarship Program
8 include the following:

- 9 (1) Encourage higher-performing students at community colleges.
- 10 (2) Utilize the State's educational resources to the fullest.
- 11 (3) Create more educational and career options for students.
- 12 (4) Realize significant cost-savings to the State.
- 13 (5) Develop a more competitive workforce.

14 **SECTION 2.** Scholarship Eligibility. – A student shall be eligible to receive a High
15 Achieving Tuition Scholarship if the student meets all of the following requirements:

- 16 (1) In the academic semester prior to enrolling in a community college,
17 graduates with at least a 3.5 unweighted grade point average from either a (i)
18 public high school located in this State or (ii) a nonpublic high school or
19 home school, as defined in Article 39 of Chapter 115C of the General
20 Statutes, located in this State.
- 21 (2) Presents evidence of United States citizenship.
- 22 (3) Qualifies as a resident of this State for tuition purposes, as provided in
23 Article 14 of Chapter 116 of the General Statutes.
- 24 (4) Gains admission as a degree-seeking student at a North Carolina community
25 college.
- 26 (5) Complies with Selective Service registration requirements.

27 **SECTION 3.** Award of Scholarships. – The State Education Assistance Authority
28 (Authority) shall annually award High Achieving Tuition Scholarships to all eligible students in
29 an amount not to exceed the cost of 16 credit hours of tuition per fall or spring academic
30 semester for a maximum of four academic semesters. The Authority shall require students to
31 complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to be eligible for a scholarship
32 award and shall reduce the amount of the scholarship award for any student by the amount of
33 grants or scholarships received by that student from other State or federal sources. The
34 Authority shall award scholarships to eligible students in the order in which they are received.
35 The Authority shall award scholarships beginning with the fall semester of the 2016-2017
36 school year to students graduating from high school in the 2015-2016 school year.



1 **SECTION 4.** Scholarship Renewal. – A scholarship awarded to an eligible student
2 shall be renewed if the student demonstrates maintenance of satisfactory academic progress by
3 maintaining a 3.0 grade point average and completion of a minimum of 30 semester credit
4 hours by the end of the academic year.

5 **SECTION 5.** Scholarship Revocation. – A scholarship awarded to an eligible
6 student shall be revoked for any of the following at the conclusion of each semester:

- 7 (1) Failure to maintain a 2.5 grade point average.
- 8 (2) Failure to maintain a course load of at least 12 credit hours.
- 9 (3) Default or unpaid refund on a student financial aid program.
- 10 (4) Felony convictions for a controlled substances offense under Article 5 of
11 Chapter 90 of the General Statutes.

12 **SECTION 6.** Scholarship Administration. – The Authority shall adopt rules for
13 administration of the High Achieving Tuition Scholarship Program.

14 **SECTION 7.** Course Counseling and Transfer. – Community colleges shall ensure
15 that scholarship recipients are provided counseling and assistance in selecting coursework that
16 reflects their educational and career goals. For students planning to enter a constituent
17 institution of The University of North Carolina, the State Board of Community Colleges shall
18 ensure that credits earned by those students participating in the program are transferable.

19 **SECTION 8.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the State Education
20 Assistance Authority the sum of two million dollars (\$2,000,000) for the 2016-2017 fiscal year
21 for administrative costs and award of scholarships. It is the intent of the General Assembly to
22 appropriate three million five hundred thousand dollars (\$3,500,000) in recurring funds for the
23 2017-2018 fiscal year for administrative costs and award of scholarships. Any unexpended
24 funds for this purpose shall not revert at the end of each fiscal year but shall remain available to
25 award scholarships to eligible students.

26 **SECTION 9.** The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina shall
27 adopt a policy to permit any student admitted to a constituent institution who receives a High
28 Achieving Tuition Scholarship to defer admission to the constituent institution for two years,
29 beginning with the 2016-2017 school year.

30 **SECTION 10.(a)** For the 2015-2016 school year, the State Board of Education
31 shall direct local boards of education to survey high school students in their senior year who
32 meet the eligibility requirements of the High Achieving Tuition Scholarship to determine
33 interest in the program, including numbers of students who intend to apply for the scholarship,
34 and reasons that eligible students may choose not to apply for the scholarship. The State Board
35 of Education shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee no later than
36 December 1, 2015, on the results of this survey.

37 **SECTION 10.(b)** The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina
38 and the State Board of Community Colleges shall jointly identify and report to the Joint
39 Legislative Education Oversight Committee by April 1, 2016, on potential issues related to the
40 transition of High Achieving Tuition Scholarship recipients from community college to
41 university enrollment, and other recommendations to improve and expand the High Achieving
42 Tuition Scholarship Program.

43 **SECTION 10.(c)** The State Education Assistance Authority shall report annually
44 on or before September 1, beginning in 2017, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight
45 Committee on the implementation of the High Achieving Tuition Scholarship Program. The
46 report shall include the following information:

- 47 (1) Number of students applying for the scholarship, including information
48 about student demographics and geographic location.
- 49 (2) Number of students awarded the scholarship, including information about
50 student demographics and geographic location, and community college
51 attended.

- 1 (3) Amount of funds expended for scholarships.
- 2 (4) Number of students whose scholarships were revoked and reasons for
- 3 revocation.
- 4 (5) Other relevant information, as determined by the State Education Assistance
- 5 Authority.
- 6 **SECTION 11.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2015.