

1 SB157
2 164966-1
3 By Senators Brewbaker, Hightower, Coleman, Blackwell, Stutts,
4 Melson, Scofield, Shelnut, Holtzclaw, Bussman, Livingston,
5 Glover, Dial, Holley, Ross, Smitherman, Figures, Dunn,
6 Chambliss, Singleton and Marsh
7 RFD: Education and Youth Affairs
8 First Read: 05-MAR-15

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8 SYNOPSIS: This bill would establish the Fostering
9 Hope Scholarship Act of 2015.

10 This bill would require the Department of
11 Human Resources to develop and administer Fostering
12 Hope, a tuition scholarship program for designated
13 youth who are, or were, in the state foster care
14 program, including those children adopted from the
15 program at the age of 14 or older.

16 This bill would impose requirements for
17 participation.

18 This bill would authorize the Fostering Hope
19 program to pay tuition and required fees for
20 eligible children at public two-year and four-year
21 institutions of higher education in the state.

22 This bill would authorize the Fostering Hope
23 program to pay for job training courses or skill
24 certifications, not considered an associate's
25 degree, as offered by public two-year and four-year
26 institutions of higher education in the state or
27 any other publicly funded training program in the

1 state, as governed by rules promulgated by the
2 Department of Human Resources.

3 This bill would provide a support system for
4 participants in the scholarship program.

5 This bill would limit, to a maximum of 10
6 percent, that portion of any annual appropriations
7 for the program that may be used for the mentor
8 program.

9 This bill would also limit scholarship
10 benefits and would require the Department of Human
11 Resources to draft rules as necessary for the
12 operation of the program, including rules to limit
13 spending on the program to available state funds.

14
15 A BILL

16 TO BE ENTITLED

17 AN ACT

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19 To establish the Fostering Hope Scholarship Act of
20 2015, relating to a tuition scholarship program for current or
21 former foster children in Alabama; to impose requirements for
22 participation; to direct the Department of Human Resources to
23 adopt and administer the program; to authorize the department
24 to develop rules to administer the program; to establish a
25 support system for participants in the program; and to repeal
26 Section 3 of Act 2014-413, now appearing as Section 40-18-362,
27 Code of Alabama 1975.

1 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

2 Section 1. This act shall be known and may be cited
3 as the Fostering Hope Scholarship Act of 2015.

4 Section 2. (a) The State Department of Human
5 Resources shall develop and administer Fostering Hope, a
6 scholarship program for designated persons currently or
7 formerly in the state foster care program, including children
8 adopted from the program at the age of 14 or older. Commencing
9 with the 2016-2017 academic year, the program, on behalf of
10 participants, shall do either of the following:

11 (1) Pay for tuition and required fees at any public
12 two-year or four-year institution of higher education in the
13 state.

14 (2) Pay required fees for job training courses or
15 skill certifications that are offered by any public two-year
16 or four-year institution of higher education in the state or
17 other publicly funded training programs in the state, and not
18 considered an associate's degree, if the courses or
19 certifications are first approved by the department.

20 (b) Payments of tuition and required fees are
21 considered program scholarships.

22 Section 3. The program shall include a mentor
23 service administered by the department as a support system for
24 participants of the college tuition scholarship program. This
25 service shall include mentors who shall be compensated by the
26 department, as employees or contractors, to help participants

1 adapt to independent living and to academics and other college
2 or university activities.

3 Section 4. Appropriations for the program shall be
4 used by the department on behalf of participants in each
5 fiscal year to pay public two-year and four-year institutions
6 of higher education or other publicly funded training programs
7 in the state for benefits extended to participants by the
8 Fostering Hope program. The department may also use not more
9 than 10 percent of the total state appropriation made to the
10 program in any fiscal year for costs associated with the
11 mentor service. The department may not spend appropriations
12 for the program for purposes other than those listed in this
13 section. Any monies appropriated to the department for
14 Fostering Hope that are unspent at the end of a fiscal year
15 shall be carried over for use by the program in the next
16 fiscal year. The department shall develop rules for ensuring
17 that expenses of the Fostering Hope program in a fiscal year
18 do not exceed funding for the program in that fiscal year. For
19 that purpose, and any other provision of this act to the
20 contrary notwithstanding, the department may limit the
21 acceptance of applications for Fostering Hope scholarships and
22 may limit the award of scholarships.

23 Section 5. The program shall pay tuition and
24 required fees for a participant as governed by rules
25 promulgated by the department. In no event shall tuition and
26 required fees be paid pursuant to this section for more than
27 72 academic hours toward an associate's degree or 144 academic

1 hours toward a bachelor's degree for each participant. The
2 program shall only pay tuition and fees relating to an
3 undergraduate degree.

4 Section 6. (a) To be eligible to participate in the
5 program, a scholarship applicant shall satisfy all of the
6 following:

7 (1) Be in the legal custody of the foster care
8 program of the department at the time of graduation from high
9 school or earning a General Educational Development (GED) high
10 school equivalency certification; or in the permanent legal
11 custody of the foster care program of the department when his
12 or her adoption is finalized, at 14 years of age or older, and
13 has graduated from high school or earned a GED certification.

14 (2) Have net personal assets worth less than thirty
15 thousand dollars (\$30,000), subject to adjustment by the
16 Commissioner of the Department of Human Resources to account
17 for inflation.

18 (3) Is younger than 26 years of age at the start of
19 the semester, training program, or certification program for
20 which tuition or fees are requested from the program.

21 (4) Is accepted for enrollment in a degree-granting,
22 training, or certification program, or is enrolled and working
23 toward a degree, certificate, or completion of a job training
24 program, at a public two-year or four-year institution of
25 higher education or publicly funded training program in the
26 state.

1 (5) Is making adequate progress toward the
2 completion of a degree, certification, or training program as
3 determined by rule promulgated by the department.

4 (6) Has completed and submitted to the United States
5 Department of Education a Free Application for Federal Student
6 Aid (FAFSA), or the equivalent, before each year in which he
7 or she receives a Fostering Hope scholarship. He or she shall
8 have applied for all federal student financial aid grants,
9 including Pell grants, Supplemental Education Opportunity
10 Grants, and Education and Training Vouchers, identified as
11 being available for the student's application by the
12 department or by Federal Student Aid, an office of the United
13 States Department of Education, or its successor agency.

14 (b) To be eligible to participate in the program
15 after the first year of participation, an applicant shall also
16 satisfy all of the following:

17 (1) Complete, after the first academic year in which
18 he or she receives a Fostering Hope scholarship, annual
19 volunteer service requirements or employment requirements
20 pursuant to rules promulgated by the department.

21 (2) Remain in good standing with the policies
22 established by the college, university, or other training or
23 certification program in the state in which he or she is
24 enrolled.

25 (c) Scholarship funds may be disbursed only if
26 sufficient funding for the Fostering Hope program is
27 available.

1 Section 7. A scholarship awarded pursuant to this
2 act may not be reduced by the amount of any federal aid,
3 scholarship funds, or grant funds otherwise received by the
4 person or by the amount of any private donations made to
5 assist the Fostering Hope program.

6 Section 8. Fostering Hope scholarship funds shall be
7 applied to tuition and mandatory fees before any other grant,
8 loan, voucher, or scholarship the student may be awarded to
9 attend a public two-year or four-year institution of higher
10 education in the state or publicly funded state training
11 program.

12 Section 9. Any other provision of this act to the
13 contrary notwithstanding, an otherwise eligible person who
14 earns grants, scholarships, or other awards, excluding loans,
15 sufficient to pay his or her tuition, room and board, and
16 other fees at a public two-year or four-year institution of
17 higher education in the state or publicly funded state
18 training program, as governed by rules promulgated by the
19 department, may not participate in the Fostering Hope program.

20 Section 10. The commissioner of the department may
21 promulgate rules as necessary to implement and administer this
22 act.

23 Section 11. All laws or parts of laws which conflict
24 with this act are repealed. Specifically, Section 40-18-362,
25 Code of Alabama 1975, as added by Act 2014-413, 2014 Regular
26 Session, relating to postsecondary education assistance for
27 students in foster care, is repealed.

1 Section 12. This act shall become effective on
2 October 1, 2015, following its passage and approval by the
3 Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.