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SENATE BILL 89

54TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2019

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;

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; and

6 D. "student aid" means aid offered by the community
7 college to the student on a per-semester basis. Aid includes
8 scholarships, grants, bequests and other forms of need-based
9 aid and does not include student loans, except for loans issued
10 by the department which may be waived in exchange for a period
11 of service to the state..

12 SECTION 3. [NEW MATERIAL] CONDITIONS FOR ELIGIBILITY.--A
13 New Mexico reconnect scholarship may be awarded to an
14 individual who:

15 A. complies with the rules adopted by the
16 department pursuant to the New Mexico Reconnect Scholarship
17 Act;

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

20 C. submits to the intended community college a
21 completed:

22 (1) New Mexico reconnect scholarship
23 application form developed by the community college or the
24 department; or

25 (2) free application for federal student aid

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1 provided pursuant to the federal Higher Education Act of 1965;

2 D. is:

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

4 (2) married;

5 (3) a graduate or professional student;

6 (4) a veteran;

7 (5) a member of the United States armed
8 forces;

9 (6) an orphan;

10 (7) a ward of the court;

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

13 (9) an emancipated minor;

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

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

18 SECTION 4. [NEW MATERIAL] SCHOLARSHIP AUTHORIZED--
19 ADMINISTRATION--PREFERENCE IN SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS.--

20 A. The department shall administer the New Mexico
21 Reconnect Scholarship Act and shall adopt all rules necessary
22 to administer that act.

23 B. Scholarships shall be awarded to qualified
24 applicants. Qualifications and preferences in scholarship
25 awards shall be determined by the department pursuant to its

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1 adopted rules.

2 SECTION 5. [NEW MATERIAL] DURATION OF SCHOLARSHIP.--Each
3 scholarship is for a period of one academic semester. A
4 scholarship may be renewed until the award recipient has
5 received four consecutive semester scholarship awards or until
6 the student graduates from an eligible community college with
7 an associate's degree or certificate, whichever occurs first.

8 SECTION 6. [NEW MATERIAL] TERMINATION OF SCHOLARSHIP.--A
9 New Mexico reconnect scholarship awarded pursuant to the New
10 Mexico Reconnect Scholarship Act is terminated upon occurrence
11 of:

12 A. withdrawal of the award recipient from the
13 community college;

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

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

19 D. failure to complete at least six hours of course
20 credits in a semester in which the student received a
21 scholarship pursuant to the New Mexico Reconnect Scholarship
22 Act;

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

25 F. substantial noncompliance by the award recipient

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1 with the New Mexico Reconnect Scholarship Act or the rules
2 adopted by the department pursuant to that act.

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

4 Subject to the amount of money in the New Mexico reconnect
5 scholarship fund, the amount of New Mexico reconnect
6 scholarship awards shall not exceed the cost of tuition and
7 mandatory fees charged to all students for coursework leading
8 to completion of the eligible program of study at the eligible
9 community college attended less all other student aid provided
10 to students, which aid shall be credited first to tuition and
11 mandatory fees.

12 SECTION 8. [NEW MATERIAL] FUND CREATED.--The "New Mexico

13 reconnect scholarship fund" is created in the state treasury.
14 Money in the fund is appropriated to the department to
15 administer the New Mexico Reconnect Scholarship Act. Money in
16 the fund shall revert to the general fund at the end of a
17 fiscal year. Money in the fund shall be disbursed on warrants
18 signed by the secretary of finance and administration pursuant
19 to vouchers signed by the secretary of higher education or the
20 secretary's authorized representative.

21 SECTION 9. APPROPRIATION.--Five million eight hundred

22 thousand dollars (\$5,800,000) is appropriated from the general
23 fund to the New Mexico reconnect scholarship fund for
24 expenditure in fiscal year 2020 to carry out the provisions of
25 the New Mexico Reconnect Scholarship Act. Up to seventy-five

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1 thousand dollars (\$75,000) of the appropriation may be used by
2 the higher education department for administrative purposes.
3 Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of
4 fiscal year 2020 shall revert to the general fund.

5 SECTION 10. EFFECTIVE DATE.--The effective date of the
6 provisions of this act is July 1, 2019.

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