

First Regular Session
Seventieth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. 15-0374.01 Julie Pelegrin x2700

SENATE BILL 15-050

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Heath,

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

(None),

Senate Committees

Education
Finance

House Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 CONCERNING SCHOLARSHIPS TO AWARD COLORADO'S EXCELLENT
102 SCHOLARS.

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://www.leg.state.co.us/billsummaries>.)

The bill creates the awarding Colorado's excellent scholars (ACES) program to provide scholarships to the 3 students in each public high school each year who graduate with the highest grade point averages (GPAs) in their graduating class. The ACES program starts in the 2015-16 school year, awarding scholarships to students in the high school graduating class of 2014-15.

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters indicate new material to be added to existing statute.
Dashes through the words indicate deletions from existing statute.

The commission on higher education (commission) must adopt guidelines for the ACES program, and the department of higher education (department) must implement the program.

To be eligible for an ACES scholarship, a student must:

- ! Graduate from a Colorado high school;
- ! Achieve one of the 3 highest GPAs within the student's high school graduating class, which GPA must be at least 3.0; and
- ! Enroll in and attend a public institution of higher education in Colorado (higher education institution) starting the fall semester immediately following high school graduation.

Each school district and the state charter school institute (institute) must annually provide to the department the names of and contact information for the students who qualify for an ACES scholarship. If, because of a tie, more than 3 students from a high school qualify, the superintendent of the school district, or, for a charter high school, the principal of the school, will decide from among the eligible students which students' information to submit for the ACES scholarship.

A student who receives an ACES scholarship (ACES scholar) is eligible to continue receiving the scholarship so long as he or she is enrolled in and attending a higher education institution for at least 15 credit hours per semester and maintaining a GPA of at least 3.0. An ACES scholar may receive the scholarship for 4 consecutive academic years or until he or she attains a baccalaureate degree, whichever occurs first. An ACES scholar may apply to the department for a suspension of the ACES scholarship, which the department may grant based on its determination of the legitimacy of the student's need for a suspension. But an ACES scholar may not receive the scholarship moneys for more than the equivalent of 8 semesters. The annual amount of the scholarship is equal to the ACES scholar's student share of in-state tuition. ACES scholars are also eligible to receive the Colorado opportunity fund stipends. Eligibility for and receipt of an ACES scholarship does not alone affect a student's eligibility for enrollment in a higher education institution.

The department must annually publicize the ACES program to the school districts and the institute and on the department's web site. Each school district and the institute must provide information concerning the ACES program to the students enrolled in the public schools.

1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2 **SECTION 1.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** part 11 to article
3 3.3 of title 23 as follows:

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PART 11
AWARDING COLORADO'S EXCELLENT SCHOLARS
PROGRAM

23-3.3-1101. Short title. THIS PART 11 SHALL BE KNOWN AND MAY BE CITED AS THE "AWARDING COLORADO'S EXCELLENT SCHOLARS ACT" OR THE "ACES ACT".

23-3.3-1102. Definitions. AS USED IN THIS PART 11, UNLESS THE CONTEXT OTHERWISE REQUIRES:

(1) "ACES SCHOLAR" MEANS A STUDENT WHO RECEIVES AN ACES SCHOLARSHIP.

(2) "ACES SCHOLARSHIP" MEANS A SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED THROUGH THE AWARDING COLORADO'S EXCELLENT SCHOLARS PROGRAM CREATED IN THIS PART 11.

(3) "DEPARTMENT" MEANS THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION CREATED AND EXISTING PURSUANT TO SECTION 24-1-114, C.R.S.

(4) "INSTITUTE" MEANS THE STATE CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE ESTABLISHED IN SECTION 22-30.5-503, C.R.S.

(5) "INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION" MEANS A PUBLIC INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION OPERATING IN THIS STATE THAT IS SUPPORTED IN WHOLE OR IN PART BY COLORADO GENERAL FUND MONEYS.

(6) "PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL" MEANS A SCHOOL OF A SCHOOL DISTRICT, INCLUDING A CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZED PURSUANT TO PART 1 OF ARTICLE 30.5 OF TITLE 22, C.R.S., OR AN INSTITUTE CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZED BY THE STATE CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE PURSUANT TO PART 5 OF ARTICLE 30.5 OF TITLE 22, C.R.S., THAT ENROLLS STUDENTS IN TWELFTH GRADE.

1 (7) "SCHOOL DISTRICT" MEANS A SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZED
2 AND EXISTING PURSUANT TO LAW BUT DOES NOT INCLUDE A JUNIOR
3 COLLEGE DISTRICT.

4 (8) "STIPEND" HAS THE SAME MEANING AS PROVIDED IN SECTION
5 23-18-102 (11).

6 (9) "STUDENT'S SHARE OF IN-STATE TUITION" HAS THE SAME
7 MEANING AS PROVIDED IN SECTION 23-18-102.

8 **23-3.3-1103. Awarding Colorado's excellent scholars program**

9 **- established - eligibility - scholarships.** (1) THE COMMISSION SHALL
10 ESTABLISH THE AWARDING COLORADO'S EXCELLENT SCHOLARS PROGRAM
11 TO ANNUALLY AWARD SCHOLARSHIPS TO THE THREE STUDENTS IN EACH
12 PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL IN THE STATE WHO GRADUATE WITH THE HIGHEST
13 GRADE POINT AVERAGES WITHIN THEIR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATING CLASS.
14 THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE
15 WITH THIS PART 11 AND GUIDELINES THAT THE COMMISSION SHALL ADOPT.
16 THE COMMISSION SHALL AWARD THE ACES SCHOLARSHIP BEGINNING IN
17 THE 2015-16 ACADEMIC YEAR TO STUDENTS WHO GRADUATE FROM HIGH
18 SCHOOL IN THE 2014-15 ACADEMIC YEAR.

19 (2) TO BE ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE AN ACES SCHOLARSHIP, A
20 STUDENT MUST:

21 (a) GRADUATE FROM A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL IN THE STATE;

22 (b) ACHIEVE A GRADE POINT AVERAGE THAT IS AMONG THE THREE
23 HIGHEST GRADE POINT AVERAGES WITHIN THE STUDENT'S HIGH SCHOOL
24 GRADUATING CLASS, AND NOT LOWER THAN 3.0; AND

25 (c) ENROLL IN AND ATTEND AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER
26 EDUCATION BEGINNING IN THE FALL SEMESTER IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING
27 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.

1 (3) EACH SCHOOL DISTRICT AND THE INSTITUTE, IN ACCORDANCE
2 WITH TIMELINES ADOPTED BY THE COMMISSION, SHALL ANNUALLY
3 PROVIDE TO THE DEPARTMENT THE NAMES AND CONTACT INFORMATION
4 OF THE STUDENTS WHO GRADUATE WITH THE THREE HIGHEST GRADE POINT
5 AVERAGES FROM EACH PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OR
6 FROM EACH INSTITUTE CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL. IF THERE IS A TIE AND
7 MORE THAN THREE GRADUATING STUDENTS HOLD THE THREE HIGHEST
8 GRADE POINT AVERAGES IN A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL, THE SUPERINTENDENT
9 OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT, OR IF THE HIGH SCHOOL IS A CHARTER HIGH
10 SCHOOL, THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, SHALL DECIDE FROM AMONG THE
11 ELIGIBLE STUDENTS WHICH THREE STUDENTS' INFORMATION TO SUBMIT TO
12 THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE ACES SCHOLARSHIP.

13 (4) (a) EACH ACES SCHOLAR MAY RECEIVE THE ACES
14 SCHOLARSHIP EACH SEMESTER IN WHICH THE STUDENT ENROLLS IN AND
15 ATTENDS AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR AT LEAST FIFTEEN
16 CREDIT HOURS AND SO LONG AS THE STUDENT MAINTAINS A GRADE POINT
17 AVERAGE OF AT LEAST 3.0. EACH ACES SCHOLAR MAY RECEIVE THE
18 ACES SCHOLARSHIP FOR FOUR CONSECUTIVE ACADEMIC YEARS OR UNTIL
19 THE STUDENT ATTAINS A BACCALAUREATE DEGREE, WHICHEVER OCCURS
20 FIRST.

21 (b) NOTWITHSTANDING THE PROVISIONS OF PARAGRAPH (a) OF
22 THIS SUBSECTION (4) TO THE CONTRARY, AN ACES SCHOLAR WHO IS
23 UNABLE TO ENROLL FOR ONE OR MORE SEMESTERS AFTER RECEIVING THE
24 ACES SCHOLARSHIP MAY APPLY TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR A SUSPENSION
25 OF THE ACES SCHOLARSHIP. THE DEPARTMENT MAY GRANT THE
26 SUSPENSION BASED ON ITS DETERMINATION OF THE LEGITIMACY OF THE
27 NEED. THE TIME LIMITATION ON THE ACES SCHOLARSHIP IS TOLLED FOR

1 THE LENGTH OF THE SUSPENSION THAT THE DEPARTMENT GRANTS. AN
2 ACES SCHOLAR WHO RECEIVES A SUSPENSION MAY NOT RECEIVE THE
3 ACES SCHOLARSHIP MONEYS FOR MORE THAN THE EQUIVALENT OF EIGHT
4 SEMESTERS.

5 (5) THE ANNUAL AMOUNT OF EACH ACES SCHOLARSHIP IS THE
6 AMOUNT OF THE STUDENT'S SHARE OF IN-STATE TUITION FOR THE
7 INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION THAT THE STUDENT ATTENDS FOR THE
8 APPLICABLE ACADEMIC YEAR. EACH ACES SCHOLAR ALSO RECEIVES THE
9 STIPEND AS PROVIDED IN PART 2 OF ARTICLE 18 OF THIS TITLE.

10 (6) ELIGIBILITY FOR OR RECEIPT OF AN ACES SCHOLARSHIP DOES
11 NOT ALONE AFFECT A STUDENT'S ELIGIBILITY FOR ENROLLMENT IN AN
12 INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

13 **23-3.3-1104. ACES scholarships - publication.** (1) BEGINNING
14 IN THE 2015-16 ACADEMIC YEAR, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ANNUALLY
15 NOTIFY THE INSTITUTE AND EACH SCHOOL DISTRICT IN THE STATE
16 CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF THE ACES SCHOLARSHIP, THE
17 CRITERIA BY WHICH THE COMMISSION AWARDS THE ACES SCHOLARSHIPS,
18 AND THE AMOUNT AND DURATION OF THE ACES SCHOLARSHIPS. THE
19 INSTITUTE SHALL ANNUALLY DISTRIBUTE THE INFORMATION CONCERNING
20 ACES SCHOLARSHIPS TO EACH INSTITUTE CHARTER SCHOOL, AND EACH
21 SCHOOL DISTRICT SHALL ANNUALLY DISTRIBUTE THE INFORMATION
22 CONCERNING ACES SCHOLARSHIPS TO EACH PUBLIC SCHOOL OF THE
23 SCHOOL DISTRICT. THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ALSO POST THE INFORMATION
24 CONCERNING THE ACES SCHOLARSHIP ON THE DEPARTMENT'S WEB SITE.

25 (2) IN EACH ACADEMIC YEAR IN WHICH THE COMMISSION AWARDS
26 ACES SCHOLARSHIPS, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL POST ON THE
27 DEPARTMENT'S WEB SITE THE NAME OF EACH STUDENT WHO RECEIVES AN

1 ACES SCHOLARSHIP.

2 **23-3.3-1105. Funding.** THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SHALL
3 ANNUALLY APPROPRIATE MONEYS TO THE DEPARTMENT IN THE AMOUNT
4 NECESSARY TO FULLY FUND THE ACES SCHOLARSHIPS AS PROVIDED IN
5 THIS PART 11.

6 **SECTION 2. Safety clause.** The general assembly hereby finds,
7 determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate
8 preservation of the public peace, health, and safety.