

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD

TWO THOUSAND NINETEEN

H.P. 640 - L.D. 866

An Act To Support College Completion by Homeless Youth in Maine

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §10014 is enacted to read:

§10014. Homeless students

1. Definitions. As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

A. "Homeless student" means a student under 25 years of age who has been verified, at any time during the 24 months immediately preceding the student's admission to or while enrolled in a state postsecondary educational institution, as a homeless child or youth as defined in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001, 42 United States Code, Section 11431 et seq. by:

(1) The director of a governmental or nonprofit agency that receives public or private funding to provide services to persons experiencing homelessness, or the director's designee;

(2) A local education agency liaison for children and youth experiencing homelessness pursuant to the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001, 42 United States Code, Section 11431 et seq. or a school counselor or school social worker as defined in section 4008, subsection 1;

(3) An attorney representing the student in any legal matter, if the student is under 18 years of age;

(4) The director of a federal outreach and student services program designed to identify and provide services for economically disadvantaged individuals or a federal program about gaining early awareness and readiness for undergraduate programs, or the director's designee; or

(5) A financial aid administrator at a state postsecondary educational institution.

B. "State postsecondary educational institution" means the University of Maine System and any college within the system, the Maine Community College System and any college within the system and Maine Maritime Academy.

2. Homeless student liaison. Each state postsecondary educational institution may designate a staff member who is employed within the institution's financial aid office or another appropriate office or department to serve as the homeless student liaison. The homeless student liaison must have expertise in the financial aid eligibility of homeless students and in identifying services for homeless students. The liaison shall assist homeless students in applying for federal and state financial aid and applying for and receiving available services.

3. Housing resources. When housing resources are offered by and available for occupancy at a state postsecondary educational institution, the state postsecondary educational institution shall:

A. Give homeless students who are enrolled full-time in that state postsecondary educational institution priority for available housing resources, including but not limited to priority for housing facilities that remain open for occupation during academic and campus breaks; and

B. Develop individual housing plans for homeless students who are enrolled full-time.

4. Homeless student financial assistance grant. Beginning in fiscal year 2020-21, each state postsecondary educational institution may award a homeless student a grant under this subsection. The grant award is limited to the amount of the cost of tuition, less all other financial aid received from a Federal Pell Grant or any other merit-based or needs-based grant or scholarship, not including a grant awarded under this subsection, that the homeless student is not required to repay. To be eligible for a grant under this subsection, a homeless student must have completed an application for federal student financial aid programs for which the student may be eligible for the academic year for which the student applies. The availability of the grant and the amount of the grant under this subsection are subject to the amounts appropriated by the Legislature.

5. Fund. Each state postsecondary educational institution shall establish a nonlapsing fund to distribute grant awards pursuant to subsection 4. The University of Maine System, Maine Community College System and Maine Maritime Academy shall include the estimated full funding necessary to provide the grants under subsection 4 in the preparation of the biennial budget for presentation to the Governor and the Legislature.