
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 2405 Session of
2024

INTRODUCED BY RABB, BELLMON, MAYES, SMITH-WADE-EL, MADDEN, HILL-
EVANS, KAZEEM, PARKER, OTTEN, CEPEDA-FREYTIZ, INNAMORATO,
GREEN AND SANCHEZ, JUNE 11, 2024

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, JUNE 11, 2024

AN ACT

1 Amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), entitled "An
2 act relating to the public school system, including certain
3 provisions applicable as well to private and parochial
4 schools; amending, revising, consolidating and changing the
5 laws relating thereto," establishing the Freedom Schools
6 Grant Program; and making an appropriation.

7 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
8 hereby enacts as follows:

9 Section 1. The act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known
10 as the Public School Code of 1949, is amended by adding an
11 article to read:

12 ARTICLE XV-N

13 FREEDOM SCHOOLS GRANT PROGRAM

14 Section 1501-N. Scope of article.

15 This article relates to the Freedom Schools Grant Program.

16 Section 1502-N. Definitions.

17 The following words and phrases when used in this article
18 shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
19 context clearly indicates otherwise:

1 "Applicant." A public school, community college or
2 nonprofit, community-based organization in this Commonwealth
3 that submits an application for a grant.

4 "Community college." As defined in section 1901-A(4).

5 "Department." The Department of Education of the
6 Commonwealth.

7 "Freedom school." A six-week summer educational program that
8 is operated by a public school, community college or nonprofit,
9 community-based organization in this Commonwealth with a mission
10 to mitigate the opportunity gap and learning loss for students
11 in a disenfranchised community most affected by the COVID-19
12 pandemic through the use of a research-based, multicultural
13 curriculum and by expanding the teaching of African American
14 history, developing leadership skills and providing an
15 understanding of the tenets of the civil rights movement in the
16 United States.

17 "Grant." A grant awarded by the department under the program
18 to a public school, community college or nonprofit, community-
19 based organization in this Commonwealth.

20 "Program." The Freedom Schools Grant Program established
21 under section 1503-N.

22 "Public school." A school district, charter school, regional
23 charter school or career and technical school.

24 "Secretary." The Secretary of Education of the Commonwealth.
25 Section 1503-N. Freedom Schools Grant Program.

26 The Freedom Schools Grant Program is established within the
27 department for the purpose of awarding grants to public schools,
28 community colleges or nonprofit, community-based organizations
29 in this Commonwealth to establish freedom schools for students
30 in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 in accordance with the

1 integrity and practices of the freedom school model established
2 during the civil rights movement in the United States.

3 Section 1504-N. Implementation of program.

4 (a) Duties of department.--The department shall have the
5 following duties:

6 (1) Adopt guidelines for the approval of an application
7 for a grant and the use of the grant.

8 (2) Determine the form and manner in which an
9 application for a grant may be filed with the department.

10 (3) Make applications for grants available to public
11 schools, community colleges and nonprofit, community-based
12 organizations in this Commonwealth, including information
13 regarding the application process.

14 (4) Provide notice of the program to public schools,
15 community colleges and nonprofit, community-based
16 organizations in this Commonwealth.

17 (b) Duties of freedom schools.--A freedom school that is
18 recipient of a grant award shall have the following duties:

19 (1) Implement strategies that focus on the following:

20 (i) Racial justice and equity.

21 (ii) Transparency and building trusting
22 relationships.

23 (iii) Self-determination and governance.

24 (iv) Building on community strengths and community
25 wisdom.

26 (v) Utilizing current data, best practices and
27 evidence.

28 (vi) Shared leadership and collaboration.

29 (vii) A reflective learning culture.

30 (viii) A whole-child approach to education.

1 (ix) Literacy.

2 (2) Ensure that each teacher in the freedom school is
3 from the local community, with an emphasis on historically
4 disadvantaged youth, including African American students and
5 other students of color.

6 (c) Application.--A public school, community college or
7 nonprofit, community-based organization in this Commonwealth
8 may apply for a grant to establish a freedom school by
9 submitting an application to the department. The secretary shall
10 determine, in accordance with the guidelines adopted by the
11 department under subsection (a)(1) and (2) and the criteria
12 specified under section 1505-N, the amount of the grant award
13 for an applicant.

14 Section 1505-N. Eligibility for grants.

15 A public school, community college or nonprofit, community-
16 based organization in this Commonwealth that submits an
17 application for a grant to establish a freedom school may be
18 eligible for a grant, including an entity that collaborates with
19 the Children's Defense Fund. In determining whether to award a
20 grant to an applicant and the amount of the grant award, the
21 department shall award a grant to an applicant that demonstrates
22 a likelihood of reasonable success in achieving the objectives
23 for the freedom school as specified in the application,
24 including any of the following objectives:

25 (1) Engaging, culturally relevant and challenging
26 curricula.

27 (2) High-quality teaching.

28 (3) Wrap-around supports and opportunities.

29 (4) Positive discipline practices, including
30 restorative justice.

1 (5) Inclusive leadership.

2 Section 1506-N. Appropriation.

3 The sum of \$5,000,000 is appropriated from the General Fund
4 to the department for the purposes of awarding grants and
5 implementing the program. The appropriation under this section
6 shall not lapse at the end of a fiscal year.

7 Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.