

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 138

BY SENATOR MIZELL

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Board of Regents to conduct a study relative to the state's higher education financial aid programs and to submit a report of findings and conclusions, including any recommendations for related legislation, to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education not later than February 14, 2025.

WHEREAS, The Legislature of Louisiana through R.S. 17:5001 et seq., created the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students, also known as TOPS, through which the state provides financial assistance to any eligible student who enrolls on a full-time basis in an eligible college or university to pursue an academic undergraduate degree or skill or occupational training as defined by the administering agency including a vocational or technical education certificate or diploma program or a nonacademic undergraduate degree; and

WHEREAS, a student shall be eligible for a TOPS Opportunity, Performance, Honors, or TOPS-Tech Award based on his academic achievement; and

WHEREAS, a TOPS-Tech Award recipient may enroll in those associate's degree or other shorter-term training education programs that are aligned to state workforce priorities as determined by the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature of Louisiana, through R.S. 17:3047 et seq., created the M.J. Foster Promise Program to provide a financial assistance award to an eligible adult student who enrolls in a qualified program at a two-year public postsecondary education institution or an accredited proprietary school licensed by the Board of Regents to pursue

an associate degree or a shorter-term postsecondary education credential that is a requisite for certain high-demand, high-wage occupations aligned to Louisiana's workforce priorities; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature of Louisiana in R.S. 17:3046 et seq., finds that a college education should be available to all qualified students, regardless of their financial means, and declares that the Louisiana GO Grant program established and administered by the Board of Regents has enhanced access to postsecondary educational opportunities for Louisiana students with demonstrated financial need; and

WHEREAS, the effective functioning of these programs in conjunction with all other financial assistance programs is critical to meeting the state's postsecondary educational attainment goals, and thereby providing an educated workforce that the state's economy needs and increasing workforce participation; and

WHEREAS, in order to further the success of Louisiana's students and strengthen the workforce, it is appropriate that a study be conducted relative to the ways in which these financial aid programs, and other programs that provide financial assistance to students as they pursue a postsecondary education and the interconnection between these programs can be maximized for the benefit of all students and the state as a whole.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Board of Regents to study the functioning of state's financial aid programs and to submit a report of findings and conclusions, including any recommendations for related legislation, to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education not later than February 14, 2025.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the report shall include, at minimum, the following:

- (1) An explanation of any barriers which prohibit eligibility for these programs.
- (2) Strategies to align the eligibility criteria for each financial assistance program in ways that enable them to work together more effectively.
- (3) Strategies to align the eligibility criteria for each financial assistance program with the Louisiana Board of Regents' minimum admission requirements and the state's college and career ready definition.

(4) Recommendations for legislation, if any, necessary to remove barriers or otherwise improve the functioning and utilization of financial assistance programs for Louisiana's students.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the commissioner of higher education.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE