
DIGEST

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HB 399 Original

2018 Regular Session

Gary Carter

Abstract: In the event of insufficient funding, provides for reducing or eliminating Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) awards based on a student's academic and financial criteria and eliminates payment of Performance and Honors Award stipends to students.

Present law provides for the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) as a program of merit scholarships for students attending certain postsecondary education institutions who meet certain academic and other qualifications. Provides for a baseline tuition award amount and, in addition, an annual stipend of \$400 for Performance Awards and \$800 for Honors Awards.

Present law requires the legislature annually to appropriate funds sufficient to cover the costs of TOPS awards. Requires the administering agency, if the legislature does not appropriate sufficient money to fully fund all awards, to equitably reduce the amount of awards, including Performance and Honors stipends, for each qualifying student by an equal percentage on a pro rata basis a "pro rata cut", so that every student receives the award for which he qualifies and the total amount of all awards does not exceed the funds available.

If the appropriation is not sufficient, proposed law requires identification of each student whose expected family contribution (EFC) is no greater than twice the amount necessary to qualify for a Pell Grant and each student whose ACT score is 30 or higher; such students are referred to as identified students. Proposed law provides for application of pro rata cuts to and elimination of award amounts as follows:

- (1) If funds are sufficient to fully fund awards for identified students, other students' awards are cut on a pro rata basis.
- (2) If funds are not sufficient to fully fund awards for identified students, the identified students' awards are cut on a pro rata basis and awards are eliminated for other students.

Proposed law provides that in the event of insufficient funding, Performance and Honors stipends shall not be awarded to students and that money will be used to fund other awards.

(Amends R.S. 17:5065(D); Adds R.S. 17:5065(E))