
DIGEST

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HB 399 Engrossed

2018 Regular Session

Gary Carter

Abstract: Provides for prioritizing Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) award funding based on award levels and Pell Grant eligibility and eliminates payment of Performance and Honors Award stipends if funding is insufficient.

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.

Proposed law, if funding is insufficient, provides that to the extent that funding is available, the administering agency shall fund or reduce awards in the following order:

- (1) Fully fund the award of each student who qualifies for an Honors Award.
- (2) Fully fund the award of each student who qualifies for a Performance Award.
- (3) Fully fund the award of each student who qualifies for an Opportunity Award and is eligible for a Pell Grant (Pell-eligible).
- (4) Subject the award of each student who qualifies for an Opportunity Award and is not Pell-eligible and the award of each student who qualifies for a TOPS-Tech Award and is Pell-eligible to a pro rata cut.
- (5) Subject the award of each student who qualifies for a TOPS-Tech Award and is not Pell-eligible to a pro rata cut.

Proposed law provides that if funding is insufficient, 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))

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Education to the original bill:

1. Revise procedure for funding or reducing TOPS awards in the event of insufficient funding by providing for a prioritization schedule based on award levels and Pell Grant eligibility.