

2020 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 870 (Substitute for House Bill No. 786 by Representative Garofalo)

BY REPRESENTATIVE GAROFALO

TOPS: Provides relative to qualifications for Taylor Opportunity Program for Students scholarships

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact the heading of Part IV of Chapter 50 of Title 17 of the Louisiana

3 Revised Statutes of 1950 and to enact R.S. 17:5103, relative to the Taylor

4 Opportunity Program for Students; to provide relative to eligibility for awards; to

5 waive or modify certain eligibility provisions in response to circumstances related

6 to the public health emergency; and to provide for related matters.

7 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

8 Section 1. The heading of Part IV of Chapter 50 of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised

9 Statutes of 1950 is hereby amended and reenacted and R.S. 17:5103 is hereby enacted to

10 read as follows:

11 PART IV. STUDENTS ~~DISPLACED~~ AFFECTED BY CERTAIN

12 ~~NATURAL DISASTERS~~ AND EMERGENCIES

13 * * *

14 §5103. Eligibility under declared health emergency

15 A. The legislature finds that due to the effects of the public health emergency

16 declared by the governor on March 11, 2020, relative to the novel coronavirus,

17 COVID-19, it is in the best interest for the education of the people of the state that

18 initial and continuing eligibility requirements established in Part I of this Chapter for

19 awards pursuant to the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students be modified as

1 provided by this Section for students impacted as a result of the public health
2 emergency.

3 B.(1) In response to the public health emergency, provisions of this Chapter
4 that provide for initial eligibility are modified or waived as more fully specified in
5 this Subsection:

6 (a) Notwithstanding the provisions of R.S. 17:5062, the deadline for taking
7 the ACT or SAT for consideration for an award for the 2020-2021 academic year is
8 September 30, 2020. The administering agency shall not reduce the time period of
9 eligibility for the award, as set forth in R.S. 17:5002, of an applicant who qualifies
10 for an award pursuant to authority granted by this Subparagraph.

11 (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of R.S. 17:5026, a student on a Jump
12 Start graduation track shall not be required to complete any Jump Start course,
13 experience, or credential that was waived by the student's high school for high school
14 graduation purposes.

15 (c) The administering agency may waive the home study requirements of
16 R.S. 17:5029 for a student if it determines that the student's failure to meet those
17 requirements was, more likely than not, due solely to consequences of measures
18 taken to limit the spread of COVID-19.

19 (2) The provisions of this Subsection apply only to students who meet one
20 of the following criteria:

21 (a) The student was enrolled in a Louisiana public high school.

22 (b) The student was enrolled in a nonpublic high school in Louisiana having
23 the approval by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education required by
24 Part I of this Chapter for program eligibility purposes.

25 (c) The student resided in the state of Louisiana and was enrolled in a home
26 study program approved by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

27 (d) The student resided out of state during the 2019- 2020 academic year but
28 is able to meet the residency requirements to qualify for an award provided for in
29 R.S. 17:5023.

1 C.(1) In response to the public health emergency, provisions of this Chapter
2 relative to continuing eligibility are modified or waived with respect to the 2019-
3 2020 academic year as more fully specified in this Subsection:

4 (a) The provisions of R.S. 17:5041 or 5042 requiring that a student meet
5 steady academic progress as defined by the administering agency are waived.

6 (b) The provisions of R.S. 17:5041 or 5042 requiring that a student achieve
7 a certain cumulative grade point average to continue eligibility for his award are
8 waived.

9 (c) For a student whose program award was suspended due to a low grade
10 point average or failure to make steady academic progress, the time periods provided
11 in Part I of this Chapter for the student to meet such requirement before losing
12 program eligibility shall be extended by one semester for each semester the student
13 is unable to enroll or complete due to measures taken to limit the spread of
14 COVID-19.

15 (d) The administering agency may, by rule, waive any provision of Part I of
16 this Chapter that imposes a program requirement or condition that a student cannot
17 comply with or meet if the administering agency determines that the failure to
18 comply with the requirement or meet the condition is, more likely than not, due
19 solely to a consequence of measures taken to limit the spread of COVID-19.

20 (2) The provisions of this Subsection apply only to students who meet one
21 of the following criteria:

22 (a) The student was enrolled full time as of the census date at an eligible
23 college or university during the spring semester of 2020.

24 (b) The student was enrolled full time at an out-of-state college or university
25 as of the census date during the spring semester of 2020.

26 (c) The student was scheduled to be enrolled full time at a school operating
27 on a basis other than semesters during the spring of 2020.

28 D. The administering agency may adopt any rule, policy, or guideline
29 necessary to implement the provisions of this Section and shall disseminate

- 1 information regarding program changes pursuant to the provisions of this Section in
2 the most timely manner possible.
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DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HB 870 Original

2020 Regular Session

Garofalo

Abstract: Modifies TOPS eligibility provisions in response to the public health emergency caused by the COVID-19.

Proposed law makes the following modifications to initial eligibility requirements for a Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) award:

- (1) The deadline for taking the ACT or SAT test is Sept. 30, 2020. (The deadline is normally April as provided by rule.)
Present law provides that a student loses a semester of eligibility if he is late qualifying. Proposed law provides that present law shall not be applied to a student who qualifies under the extended deadline.
- (2) Provides that if any Jump Start graduation requirement was waived by a high school for graduation purposes, the requirement shall also be waived for TOPS-Tech eligibility purposes.
- (3) Authorizes the administering agency to waive the home study requirements of present law if it determines that the student's failure to meet those requirements was, more likely than not, due solely to consequences of measures taken to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Proposed law makes the following modifications to continuing eligibility requirements for a TOPS award with respect to the 2019-2020 academic year:

- (1) Waives requirements for steady academic progress.
- (2) Waives requirements for the achievement of certain cumulative grade point averages.
- (3) Extends the time a student has to recover an award that was suspended because of a low grade point average or failure to make steady academic progress.
- (4) Authorizes the administering agency to waive other provisions of present law if the agency determines that a failure to comply with the provision is, more likely than not, due solely to a consequence of measures taken to limit the spread of COVID-19.

(Adds R.S. 17:5103)