
The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Cheryl Serrett.

DIGEST

SB 148 Original

2021 Regular Session

Cortez

Proposed law creates the M.J. Foster Promise Award Program to provide a financial award to an eligible student who enrolls in a qualified program at a two-year public postsecondary education institution to pursue an associate degree or shorter-term postsecondary education credential required for certain high-demand, high-wage occupations aligned to Louisiana's workforce priorities.

Proposed law provides an award of up to \$3,200 per year to apply to the tuition and required fees of each award recipient enrolled full-time or an amount proportional to the hours enrolled if the recipient is enrolled part-time. Caps the award at \$6,400 per recipient.

Proposed law requires the award to be paid by the state to the two-year public postsecondary education institution on behalf of the award recipient. Further requires all other financial aid that the student qualifies for to be applied before the M.J. Foster Promise Award. Proposed law further requires, in order to receive the funding, two-year public postsecondary institutions offering qualified programs to identify and provide a path for credentials earned to be stackable and transfer as academic credit.

Proposed law requires the Board of Regents to establish an advisory council to identify programs in which an eligible student may enroll to receive the award. Proposed law delineates the process that the advisory council must use in designating the qualified programs. Further requires the advisory council to identify and assist in the establishment of mechanisms to support award recipients to complete a qualified program and gain employment in the associated high-demand, high-wage jobs.

Proposed law provides that the advisory council is comprised of the following members or their designees:

- (1) The chancellor of Louisiana State University at Eunice.
- (2) The chancellor of Southern University at Shreveport.
- (3) The president of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System.
- (4) The commissioner of higher education.
- (5) The state superintendent of education.
- (6) The secretary of the Louisiana Department of Economic Development.
- (7) The executive director of the Louisiana Workforce Commission.

- (8) The chairman of the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council.
- (9) The secretary of the Louisiana Department of Revenue.

Proposed law requires an applicant for the award must:

- (1) Be at least twenty-one years old.
- (2) Have earned a high school diploma or its equivalent or co-enroll in a qualified program and a program to earn a high school credential.
- (3) Be a citizen of the United States.
- (4) Be a Louisiana resident during the twenty-four months preceding the date of application.
- (5) Not have previously earned an undergraduate degree at the associate level or above.
- (6) Meet any admission requirements of the postsecondary education institution and the qualified program.
- (7) Have received an honorable discharge if previously served.
- (8) Not have any criminal convictions, except for misdemeanor traffic violations.
- (9) Applied for federal student aid.
- (10) Provide the administering agency permission to collect and verify information relative to the success of the award program including information regarding the applicant's employment before and after receiving the award.
- (11) Agree to reside and work full-time in Louisiana for at least one year after the completion of the last semester that an award is provided.
- (12) Agree to annually perform, during each year that an award is received, at least twenty hours of community service or to participate for at least twenty hours in an apprenticeship, internship, or mentorship that is related to the qualified program.
- (13) Have a family income that does not exceed three hundred percent of the applicable federal poverty guideline as published in the Federal Register by the United States Department of Health and Human Services or certify unemployment or underemployment for at least the six months prior to the receipt of the award.

Proposed law provides that to maintain an award the award recipient must:

- (1) Make steady academic progress unless provided an exception for cause by the administering

agency.

- (2) Remain in good academic standing at the postsecondary education institution while enrolled in a qualified program.
- (3) Maintain continuous enrollment by earning at least one shorter-term postsecondary education credential per year or enrolling in the fall and spring semester of each academic year depending on the program in which enrolled.
- (4) Maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.00 calculated on a 4.00 scale in a qualified program for which grades are issued.
- (5) Have no criminal conviction, except for misdemeanor traffic violations.
- (6) Have received an honorable discharge if separation occurs after becoming a recipient of the award.
- (7) Have received the award for not more than three academic years.
- (8) Have used the award to earn not more than sixty hours of academic credit.
- (9) Certify the completion of at least twenty hours of community service or participation in an apprenticeship, internship, or mentorship for the prior calendar year.

Proposed law allows an award recipient who successfully completes a qualified program in less than three years to be eligible to continue to receive the award for any remaining time of eligibility by enrolling in another qualified program and continuing to meet all other eligibility requirements.

Proposed law allows an award recipient who previously received the award and enrolled in a program that is no longer a qualified program, to continue to use the award to continue in the program as long as all other continuing eligibility requirements are met.

Proposed law provides that the administering agency may seek, accept, and expend funds from any source, including private business, industry, foundations, and other groups, as well as any available federal or other governmental funding.

Proposed law provides that if the funding provided is not sufficient to fully fund all eligible award recipients, awards shall be provided to eligible students in the order that applications are received, with priority given to previous award recipients who have met all requirements for maintaining the award and who are continuing in a qualified program for which they previously received the award.

Proposed law provides that implementation of the award is subject to the appropriation of state funds by the Legislature and limits the state appropriation to \$10 million per year.

Proposed law provides for the program to be administered by the Board of Regents, through the

office of student financial assistance (OSFA) and requires the administering agency to adopt rules and regulations in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act.

Proposed law requires OSFA to establish a working group to identify federal and state programs, including childcare supplements and other aid or services, that may provide additional support to award recipients to further their postsecondary education endeavors. Provides that the working group be composed of an appointee from each of the following:

- (1) The Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services.
- (2) The Louisiana Department of Health.
- (3) The Louisiana Department of Education.
- (4) The Louisiana Workforce Commission.
- (5) The Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs.
- (6) The Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.
- (7) The OSFA.

Proposed law requires the administering agency to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Louisiana Department of Revenue and the Louisiana Workforce Commission to share information relative to a taxpayer's reported income and employment information for purposes of generating data related to the success of award recipients in the workforce. Proposed law requires that any information shared or furnished shall be held confidential by the administering agency, shall be reported in the aggregate only, and shall contain no personally identifiable information for any award recipient.

Proposed law requires the administering agency to develop and implement a uniform information reporting system for the purposes of policy analysis and program evaluation. Additionally, requires an annual report to the legislature and provides that all information reported shall be reported in the aggregate only and contain no personally identifiable information for any award recipient.

Effective upon signature of the governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Adds R.S. 17:3047-3047.7)