

2025 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 161

BY REPRESENTATIVE HUGHES

Prefiled pursuant to Article III, Section 2(A)(4)(b)(i) of the Constitution of Louisiana.

COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES: Aligns programs to which TOPS Tech and TOPS Tech Early Start awards may apply with the M.J. Foster Promise Program qualified programs

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact R.S. 17:5002(D)(1) and 5081(B)(1), relative to the Taylor
3 Opportunity Program for Students; to provide relative to TOPS Tech and TOPS Tech
4 Early Start; to provide for eligibility requirements; and to provide for related matters.

5 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

6 Section 1. R.S. 17:5002(D)(1) and 5081(B)(1) are hereby amended and reenacted
7 to read as follows:

8 §5002. Awards and amounts

9 * * *

10 D.(1) Except as otherwise provided in this Subsection, a student who is
11 eligible for a TOPS-Tech Award pursuant to this Chapter and who is enrolled:

12 (a) In an eligible public college or university that does not offer an academic
13 undergraduate degree at the baccalaureate level in those associate's degree or other
14 shorter-term training and education programs ~~that are aligned to state workforce~~
15 ~~priorities as determined by the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce~~
16 ~~Investment Council~~; as determined by the advisory council pursuant to R.S.
17 17:3047.1, shall be awarded by the state an amount determined by the administering
18 agency to equal the tuition charged by the college or university during the 2016-2017
19 academic year. ~~If the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce Investment~~

1 ~~Council determine~~ such council determines that a program is no longer aligned with
2 those priorities, an otherwise eligible student who had previously received an award
3 and enrolled in that program may continue to use the award.

4 (b) In an eligible college or university other than as provided for in
5 Subparagraph (a) of this Paragraph in those associate's degree or other shorter-term
6 training education programs ~~that are aligned to state workforce priorities as~~
7 ~~determined by the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce Investment~~
8 ~~Council,~~ as determined by the advisory council pursuant to R.S. 17:3047.1, shall be
9 awarded by the state an amount determined by the administering agency to equal the
10 weighted average of the tuition amounts charged to students attending an eligible
11 public college or university that does not offer an academic undergraduate degree at
12 the baccalaureate level during the 2016-2017 academic year. ~~If the Board of Regents~~
13 ~~and the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council determine~~ such council determines
14 that a program is no longer aligned with those priorities, an otherwise eligible
15 student who had previously received an award and enrolled in that program may
16 continue to use the award.

17 * * *

18 §5081. TOPS-Tech Early Start Award; purpose; eligibility; limitations;
19 administration; implementation; reports

20 * * *

21 B.(1) A TOPS-Tech Early Start Award may be used to fund any ~~technical~~
22 ~~or applied course leading to an Industry-Based Certification, a Certificate of Applied~~
23 ~~Science, and a Certificate of Technical Sciences offered at a Louisiana public or~~
24 ~~nonpublic postsecondary education institution or by any Louisiana training provider~~
25 ~~recognized by the Louisiana Workforce Commission and approved by the State~~
26 ~~Board of Elementary and Secondary Education as provided in Paragraph (4) of this~~
27 ~~Subsection when such certification or certificate is approved by the Workforce~~
28 ~~Investment Council as meeting the following requirements:~~ qualified program, as
29 determined by the advisory council pursuant to R.S. 17:3047.1.

1 (a) ~~Is identified by the Occupation Forecasting Conference as a credential for an~~
2 ~~occupation in top demand in Louisiana.~~

3 (b) ~~Is recognized by the State Industry-Based Certification Leadership Council.~~

4 * * *

5 Section 2. The provisions of this Act shall apply to awards for the 2026-2027 school
6 year and thereafter.

7 Section 3. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not
8 signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature
9 by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If
10 vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become
11 effective on the day following such approval.

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 161 Original 2025 Regular Session Hughes

Abstract: Provides for eligibility requirements for TOPS-Tech and TOPS-Tech Early Start.

Present law provides for the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), a merit scholarship program for certain students attending certain postsecondary education institutions.

TOPS-Tech

Present law provides for the TOPS-Tech Award for students who enroll in certain two-year programs. Requires as a requirement for eligibility for TOPS-Tech that a student enroll in certain associate's degree or shorter-term training and education programs.

Present law provides that the programs are aligned with state workforce priorities as determined by the Bd. of Regents and the La. Workforce Investment Council. Proposed law (R.S. 17:5002(D)(1)) instead requires the programs to be "qualified programs" according to the advisory council established in present law (R.S. 17:3047.1).

TOPS-Tech Early Start

Present law provides for a TOPS-Tech Early Start Award for eligible 11th and 12th grade students attending La. public high schools.

Present law provides that the award may be used at certain postsecondary education institutions for the purpose of pursuing an industry-based occupational or vocational education credential as defined by the Board of Regents when such credential also meets both of the following conditions:

- (1) Is identified by the Occupation Forecasting Conference as a credential for an occupation in top demand in Louisiana.
- (2) Is recognized by the State Industry-Based Certification Council.

Proposed law (R.S. 5081(B)(1)) instead requires any course taken with the award to be from a list of "qualified programs" according to the advisory council established in present law (R.S. 17:3047.1).

Proposed law applies to awards for the 2026-2027 school year and thereafter.

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

(Amends R.S. 17:5002(D)(1) and 5081(B)(1))