

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.

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

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact R.S. 17:5002(D)(1) and 5081(B)(1) and (D)(4) and to enact R.S.  
3 17:3047.1(H), relative to the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students; to provide  
4 relative to TOPS Tech and TOPS Tech Early Start; to provide for eligibility  
5 requirements; and to provide for related matters.

6 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

7 Section 1. R.S. 17:5002(D)(1) and 5081(B)(1) and (D)(4) are hereby amended and  
8 reenacted and R.S. 17:3047.1(H) is hereby enacted to read as follows:

9 §3047.1. Advisory council; membership; responsibilities

10 \* \* \*

11 H. The advisory council shall identify programs in which an eligible student  
12 may enroll to receive a TOPS-Tech or TOPS-Tech Early Start award. The council  
13 shall consider the qualifications for qualified programs for the M.J. Foster Promise  
14 Program when identifying such programs.

15 \* \* \*

16 §5002. Awards and amounts

17 \* \* \*

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

(a) In an eligible public college or university that does not offer an academic undergraduate degree at the baccalaureate level in those associate's degree or other shorter-term training and education programs ~~that are aligned to state workforce priorities as determined by the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council~~, as determined by the advisory council pursuant to R.S. 17:3047.1, shall be awarded by the state an amount determined by the administering agency to equal the tuition charged by the college or university during the 2016-2017 academic year. ~~If the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council determine~~ such council determines that a program is no longer aligned with those priorities, an otherwise eligible student who had previously received an award and enrolled in that program may continue to use the award.

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

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

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

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

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

14 \* \* \*

15 D. To be eligible for an initial TOPS-Tech Early Start Award, a student shall  
16 meet each of the following conditions and comply with other applicable provisions  
17 of this Section and administering agency rules:

18 \* \* \*

19 (4) Meet one of the following:

20 (a) Score at least fifteen on the English subsection and fifteen on the  
21 mathematics subsection of the ACT PLAN assessment or a successor assessment  
22 administered as part of Louisiana's Educational Planning and Assessment System or  
23 the ACT or an equivalent concordant value of the SAT.

24 (b) ~~or have attained~~ Attain a silver level score on the assessments of the ACT  
25 WorkKeys system.

26 (c) Meet the eligibility requirements for technical dual enrollment courses  
27 as determined by the Board of Regents.

28 \* \* \*

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

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

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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)]

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HB 161 Reengrossed

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 determined by 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 requires a student to meet one of the following eligibility requirements:

- (1) Score at least 15 on the English subsection and 15 on the mathematics subsection of the ACT PLAN assessment or a successor assessment administered as part of La.'s Educational Planning and Assessment System or the ACT or an equivalent concordant value of the SAT.
- (2) Attain a silver level score on the ACT WorkKeys assessments.

Proposed law adds a third alternative: meeting the eligibility requirements for technical dual enrollment courses as determined by the Bd. of Regents.

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 identified by 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) and (D)(4); Adds R.S. 17:3047.1(H))

#### Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

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

1. Add an initial eligibility option for a student to qualify for TOPS-Tech Early Start Award in lieu of certain scores on the ACT Plan or WorkKeys: meet the eligibility requirements for technical dual enrollment courses.
2. Specify that the advisory council created by present law is required to identify programs in which an eligible student may enroll to receive a TOPS-Tech or TOPS-Tech Early Start award, instead of the eligible programs for such awards being the equivalent of qualified programs for the M.J. Foster Promise Program awards.