
DIGEST

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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.