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AB-1774 Student financial aid: Student Aid Commission: extension of application deadlines. (2019-2020)

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Assembly Bill No. 1774

CHAPTER 524

An act to add Section 69513.2 to the Education Code, relating to student financial aid, and declaring the urgency thereof, to take effect immediately.

[Approved by Governor October 04, 2019. Filed with Secretary of State October 04, 2019.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1774, Bonta. Student financial aid: Student Aid Commission: extension of application deadlines.

Existing law, the Cal Grant Program, establishes the Cal Grant A Entitlement Awards, the Cal Grant B Entitlement Awards, the California Community College Transfer Cal Grant Entitlement Awards, the Competitive Cal Grant A and B Awards, the Cal Grant C Awards, and the Cal Grant T Awards under the administration of the Student Aid Commission. Existing law also establishes the Middle Class Scholarship Program under the commission's administration. Existing law establishes eligibility requirements for awards under these programs for participating students attending qualifying institutions. The eligibility requirements under these programs, as well as other financial aid programs administered by the commission, include meeting various application deadlines.

Existing law, for example, requires applicants for Cal Grant A Entitlement Awards and Cal Grant B Entitlement Awards to submit, by March 2, complete financial aid applications in the academic year of high school graduation or equivalent or in the academic year immediately following high school graduation for the immediately following award year. Similarly, existing law requires applicants for Middle Class Scholarship Program awards to complete and submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application or an equivalent application by no later than March 2 of the award year.

This bill would authorize the Student Aid Commission to grant a postponement of an application deadline of up to 30 calendar days for any financial aid program administered by the commission, as specified. This authority would apply if the commission receives a formal request to extend a deadline from a designated educational official and the commission finds that a qualifying event, as defined, has occurred that, in the judgment of the commission, has had an adverse effect on the ability of pupils or students within a school district, community college district, or an area or region within the state, such as a city or county, to successfully complete and submit their financial aid applications by the established application deadline.

The bill would specify procedures for the submission of requests for the postponement of deadlines under the bill and the notification of designated individuals and entities if such a request is granted.

With respect to application deadlines for pupils or students applying for financial aid for the 2019–20 academic year, in response to a formal request from an individual referenced in the bill that is received no later than 10 business days after the act adding this provision becomes operative, the bill would authorize the commission, by a unanimous vote of its elective officers, to retroactively postpone these deadlines in accordance with the procedures established in the bill.

This bill would declare that it is to take effect immediately as an urgency statute.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 69513.2 is added to the Education Code, to read:

69513.2. Notwithstanding any other law:

(a) The commission may grant up to an additional 30 calendar days beyond an application deadline for any financial aid program administered by the commission pursuant to this part, at the discretion of the commission, if both of the following conditions are met:

(1) The commission receives a formal request to postpone the application deadline from either the superintendent of a school district or community college district or from the president or chancellor of a California institution of higher education that is eligible to receive state funds for student financial assistance.

(2) The commission finds that a qualifying event, as defined in subdivision (d), has occurred that, in the judgment of the commission, has had an adverse effect on the ability of pupils or students within the school district, community college district, or an area or region within the state, such as a city or county, to successfully complete and submit their financial aid applications by the established application deadline.

(b) A postponement of an application deadline granted by the commission under subdivision (a) shall apply to all financial aid applicants within the school district, community college district, or the area or region, such as a city or county, that was predominantly affected by the qualifying event referenced in paragraph (2) of subdivision (a).

(c) For purposes of this section, the commission may, on a permanent basis, delegate to its elected officers, which include the chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, and any other commissioner currently serving as an elected officer, the authority to grant, by a unanimous decision of all such officers, the deadline postponement authorized by this section.

(d) For purposes of this section, a "qualifying event" is any event or extenuating circumstance outside of the control of the pupils or students in an affected school district, community college district, or area or region that, in the judgment of the commission, has had an adverse effect on the ability of students within the district to successfully complete and submit their financial aid applications by an established statutory deadline. The qualifying event shall have occurred or been ongoing during the period for which financial aid applications were available to submit for the following academic year, and includes, but is not necessarily limited to, any of the following types of events:

(1) A natural disaster.

(2) A state of emergency declared by the Governor or the President of the United States.

(3) A labor action.

(e) The commission may establish procedures, which may include a standardized application form, through which a postponement of an application deadline may be requested by the individuals referenced in paragraph (1) of subdivision (a). The formal application to the commission shall be submitted no later than 10 business days after the occurrence of the qualifying event in question, or, if the qualifying event is ongoing, no later than 10 business days after the conclusion of the qualifying event, and shall include, at a minimum, all of the following:

(1) A description of the qualifying event that is the basis for the request, including how the event in question has had an adverse effect on students' ability to submit their financial aid applications by the established deadline.

(2) A list of any financial aid outreach events, including, but not necessarily limited to, workshops or webinars sponsored by the commission, that have been canceled or delayed due to the qualifying event.

(3) When available, data showing that there has been, or is likely to be, a reduction in the number of students who have completed a financial aid application from the previous year.

(f) If the commission approves the request for a postponement of an application deadline, the commission shall issue a written notice of the postponement of the deadline within 24 hours of granting the request. The notice shall include the approved postponed deadline, and shall be sent to all of the following or their respective designees:

(1) The individual who requested the extension pursuant to paragraph (1) of subdivision (a).

(2) The Superintendent of Public Instruction.

(3) The Governor.

(4) The Director of Finance.

(5) The President of the University of California.

(6) The Chancellor of the California State University.

(7) The Chancellor of the California Community Colleges.

(8) The chairpersons of the relevant fiscal and policy committees of the Legislature.

(g) When approving a request for a postponement of an application deadline pursuant to this section, the commission shall post all of the following on its internet website:

(1) The approved postponed deadline.

(2) The public school district, community college district, or area or region, such as a city or county, to which the approved postponed deadline applies.

(h) The authority to grant postponements of application deadlines established pursuant to this section shall apply to all of the following programs established in statute, as well as any other state-funded financial aid programs administered by the commission pursuant to this part:

(1) The Cal Grant A Entitlement program established by Article 2 (commencing with Section 69434) of Chapter 1.7.

(2) The Cal Grant B Entitlement program established by Article 3 (commencing with Section 69435) of Chapter 1.7.

(3) The California Community College Transfer Cal Grant Entitlement Program established by Article 4 (commencing with Section 69436) of Chapter 1.7.

(4) The Competitive Cal Grant A and B Awards program established by Article 5 (commencing with Section 69437) of Chapter 1.7.

(5) The Middle Class Scholarship Program established by Article 22 (commencing with Section 70020).

(i) Notwithstanding subdivision (e), with respect to application deadlines for pupils or students applying for financial aid for the 2019–20 academic year, in response to a formal request from an individual referenced in paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) that is received no later than 10 business days after the act adding this section becomes operative, the commission may, by a unanimous vote of its elective officers as referenced in subdivision (c), retroactively postpone these deadlines in accordance with the procedures established in this section.

SEC. 2. This act is an urgency statute necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety within the meaning of Article IV of the California Constitution and shall go into immediate effect. The facts constituting the necessity are:

In order for students in communities that have been recently affected by events beyond their control to apply for financial aid for the 2019–20 academic year, it is necessary that this act take effect immediately.