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SB-60 Public postsecondary education: waiver of tuition and fees: California Military Department GI Bill Award Program: extended education courses. (2025-2026)

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CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2025–2026 REGULAR SESSION

SENATE BILL

NO. 60

Introduced by Senator Seyarto

January 08, 2025

An act to amend Sections 66025.3 and 69999.16 of the Education Code, relating to public postsecondary education.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 60, as introduced, Seyarto. Public postsecondary education: waiver of tuition and fees: California Military Department GI Bill Award Program: extended education courses.

Existing law establishes the University of California, administered by the Regents of the University of California, the California State University, administered by the Trustees of the California State University, and the California Community Colleges, administered by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, as the 3 segments of public postsecondary education in the state. The Donahoe Higher Education Act prohibits the campuses of those segments from charging mandatory systemwide tuition or fees to specified students who apply for a waiver, including a child of any veteran of the United States military who has a service-connected disability, has been killed in service, or has died of a service-connected disability, an undergraduate student who is a recipient of a Medal of Honor, or an undergraduate student who is a child of a recipient of a Medal of Honor and who is no more than 27 years of age, if certain requirements are satisfied.

This bill would additionally prohibit the campuses of the University of California and California State University from charging tuition or fees for specified students who enroll in an extended education course if certain requirements are satisfied and the extended education course is being used to meet the requirements of an undergraduate degree program. The bill would apply to the campuses of the University of California only to the extent that the Regents of the University of California, by appropriate resolution, make it apply.

Existing law establishes various student financial aid programs under the administration of the Student Aid Commission, including the California Military Department GI Bill Award Program. Existing law requires a qualifying member of the California National Guard, the State Guard, or the Naval Militia that receives an award under the program to, among other things, agree to use the award to obtain a certificate, degree, or diploma that the person does not hold at the time they apply for the award. Existing law authorizes the award to be used to obtain one baccalaureate, graduate, or doctoral degree or a certificate, degree, or diploma that leads to a baccalaureate, graduate, or doctoral degree.

This bill would authorize the award to also be used for an extended education course at a campus of the University of California or the California State University if the extended education course is being used to meet the requirements of an undergraduate degree program.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

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

SECTION 1. Section 66025.3 of the Education Code is amended to read:

66025.3. (a) Notwithstanding Section 76300, a campus of the University of California, the California State University, or the California Community Colleges shall not charge any mandatory systemwide tuition or fees, including enrollment fees, registration fees, differential fees, or incidental fees, to any of the following:

(1) A dependent eligible to receive assistance under Article 2 (commencing with Section 890) of Chapter 4 of Division 4 of the Military and Veterans Code.

(2) (A) ~~Any~~^A child of any veteran of the United States military who has a service-connected disability, has been killed in service, or has died of a service-connected disability, where the annual income of the child, including the value of any support received from a parent, does not exceed the state poverty level as defined in subdivision (d).

(B) Notwithstanding Section 893 of the Military and Veterans Code, the Department of Veterans Affairs may determine the eligibility for fee waivers for a child described in subparagraph (A).

(3) A dependent, or a surviving spouse who has not remarried, of any member of the California National Guard who, in the line of duty, and while in the active service of the state, was killed, died of a disability resulting from an event that occurred while in the active service of the state, or is permanently disabled as a result of an event that occurred while in the active service of the state. For ~~the~~ purposes of this paragraph, "active service of the state" refers to a member of the California National Guard activated pursuant to Section 146 of the Military and Veterans Code.

(4) (A) An undergraduate student who is a recipient of a Medal of Honor, commonly known as a Congressional Medal of Honor, or an undergraduate student who is a child of a recipient of a Medal of Honor and who is no more than 27 years ~~old~~, ^{of age}, if both of the following requirements are met:

(i) The undergraduate student's annual income, including the value of any support received from a parent, does not exceed the state poverty level as defined in subdivision (d).

(ii) The recipient of the Medal of Honor who is or was the parent of the undergraduate student is, or at the time of the recipient's death was, a California resident as determined pursuant to Chapter 1 (commencing with Section 68000) of Part 41.

(B) The Department of Veterans Affairs shall determine the eligibility of any applicant for a fee waiver under this paragraph.

(b) (1) Notwithstanding Section 76300, a campus of the University of California or the California State University shall not charge any mandatory systemwide tuition or fees, including enrollment fees, registration fees, differential fees, or incidental fees, to a current or former foster youth, if the current or former foster youth meets all of the following conditions:

(A) Is 25 years of age or younger.

(B) Has been in foster care for at least 12 consecutive months after reaching 10 years of age.

(C) Meets any of the following:

(i) Is under a current foster care placement order by the juvenile court.

(ii) Was under a foster care placement order by the juvenile court upon reaching 18 years of age.

(iii) Was adopted, or entered guardianship, from foster care.

(D) Completes and submits the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

(E) Maintains a minimum grade point average and meets other conditions necessary for the student to be in good standing at the public postsecondary educational institution that the current or former foster youth attends, as determined by the appropriate public postsecondary segment.

(F) Meets the financial need requirements established for Cal Grant A awards under Chapter 1.7 (commencing with Section 69430) of Part 42.

(2) A student shall not have the student's mandatory systemwide tuition or fees waived pursuant to this subdivision in excess of the equivalent of attendance in a four-year undergraduate program.

(3) The amount of a student's tuition or fee waiver pursuant to this subdivision shall be reduced by any state or federal financial aid, including scholarships or grants, received by the student for the academic year or semester, or the equivalent, in which the student receives the tuition or fee waiver pursuant to this subdivision.

(c) A person who is eligible for a waiver of tuition or fees under this section may receive a waiver for each academic year during which the person applies for that waiver, but an eligible person may not receive a waiver of tuition or fees for a prior academic year.

(d) As used in this section, the "state poverty level" means annual household income that is less than the amount calculated for a single person with no dependents pursuant to Section 18501 of the Revenue and ~~Tax~~ *Taxation* Code.

(e) The waiver of tuition or fees under this section shall apply only to a person who is determined to be a resident of California pursuant to Chapter 1 (commencing with Section 68000) of Part 41.

(f) Subdivision (a) shall not apply to a dependent of a veteran within the meaning of paragraph (4) of subdivision (a) of Section 890 of the Military and Veterans Code.

(g) Notwithstanding Section 76300, a campus of the University of California or the California State University shall not charge any tuition or fees for a student who enrolls in an extended education course if both of the following are met:

(1) The student meets any of the criteria set forth in subdivision (a).

(2) The extended education course is being used to meet the requirements of an undergraduate degree program.

~~(g)~~

(h) The provisions of this section shall not apply to the University of California except to the extent that the Regents of the University of California, by appropriate resolution, make a provision applicable.

SEC. 2. Section 69999.16 of the Education Code is amended to read:

69999.16. (a) Commencing January 1 of the 2009–10 academic year, and each academic year thereafter, any qualifying member of the California National Guard, the State Guard, or the Naval Militia may apply for an award under the California Military Department GI Bill.

(b) (1) A qualifying member shall meet all of the following conditions to be eligible to receive a California Military Department GI Bill award:

(A) The person is a resident within the meaning of Section 68017.

(B) The person is an active member of the California National Guard, the State Guard, or the Naval Militia.

(C) The person has been accepted or registered at, or enrolled in, a qualifying institution, as defined in subdivision (l) of Section 69432.7.

(D) The person agrees to use the award to obtain a certificate, degree, or diploma that the person does not hold at the time the person applies for the award, and enrolls in at least three academic units per semester, or the equivalent thereof. The award may be used ~~to~~ *for any of the following:*

(i) To obtain one baccalaureate, graduate, or doctoral degree. ~~The award may be used for~~

(ii) For a certificate, degree, or diploma that leads to a baccalaureate, graduate, or doctoral degree.

(iii) For an extended education course at a campus of the University of California or the California State University if the extended education course is being used to meet the requirements of an undergraduate degree program.

(E) The person agrees to serve two years in the California National Guard, the Naval Militia, or the California State Guard upon completion of the last academic period that the person uses educational assistance under this program.

(F) The person agrees to complete their course of study within 10 years of the person's initial acceptance into the program. If a person is unable to complete their course of study in the 10-year period due to federal military activation or other

unexpected circumstance, the Adjutant General of the ~~California~~ Military Department may extend that person's participation in the program for a period of up to five additional years.

(G) The person has submitted the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to the United States Department of Education.

(2) To be eligible for an award for a summer session term, a qualifying member who meets the conditions in paragraph (1) shall submit a letter from the member's unit commander that states that the member's enrollment in that summer session will not adversely impact the member's attendance at mandatory military training.

(c) Each person applying for a California Military Department GI Bill award shall submit an application for an award to the Adjutant General.

(d) The Adjutant General shall do all of the following:

(1) Annually identify the skills most needed by the California National Guard to retain members who possess, or seek to possess, those identified skills.

(2) Prioritize those applicants who qualify for an award pursuant to subdivision (b) based on the skills most needed by the California National Guard, as identified pursuant to paragraph (1).

(3) Select award recipients from among eligible applicants pursuant to subdivision (e).

(4) Certify the eligibility of applicants to the Student Aid Commission.

(5) Notify recipients of their selection for an award.

(e) The Adjutant General shall select recipients who have been judged by the Adjutant General to have outstanding ability on the basis of criteria that may include, but shall not be limited to, any of the following:

(1) The Military Occupational Specialty ~~Code~~ codes or the Air Force Specialty Code.

(2) An annual noncommissioned officer evaluation report or officer evaluation report of the preceding two years.

(3) A memorandum from the applicant's commander recommending the applicant for the award.

(4) Commendations the applicant has received.

(5) An essay, written by the applicant, explaining why education is important to the applicant.

(f) The number of awards issued by the Student Aid Commission in any fiscal year shall be limited to the number authorized in the annual Budget Act for that year, but in no event shall exceed 1,000 in any fiscal year.

(g) The Student Aid Commission shall issue the awards in accordance with Section 69999.18.