

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH LEGISLATURE
FIRST SESSION

LEGISLATIVE BILL 159

Introduced by McDonnell, 5.

Read first time January 09, 2023

Committee:

- 1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to postsecondary education; to adopt the
- 2 Fostering Independence Higher Education Grant Act.
- 3 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

1 Section 1. Sections 1 to 6 of this act shall be known and may be
2 cited as the Fostering Independence Higher Education Grant Act.

3 Sec. 2. For purposes of the Fostering Independence Higher Education
4 Grant Act:

5 (1) Commission means the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary
6 Education;

7 (2) Eligible educational institution means a public college,
8 university, community college, or institution of postsecondary education
9 in this state;

10 (3) Foster care means the service of exercising twenty-four-hour
11 daily care, supervision, custody, or control over one or more children,
12 for compensation or hire, in lieu of the care or supervision normally
13 exercised by a parent in the parent's own home. Foster care does not
14 include casual care at irregular intervals or programs as defined in
15 section 71-1910;

16 (4) Foster youth means an individual who has been placed in foster
17 care by the State of Nebraska when such individual was fourteen years of
18 age or older;

19 (5) Grant means a grant for qualified education expenses for
20 undergraduate study under the Fostering Independence Higher Education
21 Grant Act; and

22 (6) Qualified education expenses includes tuition, fees, room and
23 board, books, and required school supplies.

24 Sec. 3. (1) In order to be eligible for a grant, an individual
25 shall be a foster youth who:

26 (a) Has graduated from high school in Nebraska or completed the
27 equivalent as approved by the State Department of Education;

28 (b) Has been accepted for admission to, or is currently enrolled at,
29 an eligible educational institution;

30 (c) Has not previously (i) obtained a baccalaureate degree, (ii)
31 earned one hundred twenty or more undergraduate credit hours, or (iii)

1 received a grant for five years;

2 (d) If attending an eligible educational institution at the time of
3 application, is in good academic standing at the eligible educational
4 institution and is not subject to any disciplinary action by such
5 institution; and

6 (e) Has applied for financial aid prior to applying for a grant.

7 (2) A foster youth shall not be eligible for renewal of a grant if
8 the foster youth does not remain in good academic standing at the
9 eligible educational institution or is subject to any disciplinary action
10 by such institution. A foster youth may regain eligibility for renewal of
11 a grant if such student meets the conditions of such student's
12 disciplinary action or attains good academic standing.

13 (3) A foster youth who meets the eligibility requirements may apply
14 for and receive a grant for any year of undergraduate study, except that
15 a foster youth shall not be eligible for a grant for more than three
16 years for a two-year degree, certificate, or diploma or five years for a
17 four-year undergraduate degree.

18 (4) The commission may award a grant to an eligible foster youth for
19 four quarters, three semesters, or the equivalent during the course of a
20 single school year. In calculating the award amount, the commission shall
21 use the same calculation it would for any other term.

22 Sec. 4. (1) Subject to available appropriations, the commission
23 shall award a grant to cover the qualified education expenses of
24 attending an eligible educational institution to a foster youth who
25 applies for and meets the requirements of section 3 of this act.

26 (2) The amount of a grant shall not exceed the amount of the foster
27 youth's qualified education expenses at the eligible educational
28 institution where such foster youth is or will be enrolled after
29 deducting the amount of any institutional grant, scholarship, or tuition
30 waiver from the eligible educational institution or any other federal,
31 state, or private grant or scholarship received by the foster youth.

1 (3) The commission shall provide the grant directly to the eligible
2 educational institution at which the foster youth is or will be enrolled.

3 Sec. 5. The commission shall on or before July 31 of each year
4 submit a report electronically to the Education Committee of the
5 Legislature detailing (1) the number of foster youth that applied for a
6 grant, (2) the number of foster youth receiving a grant, (3) the amount
7 of each grant, (4) the eligible educational institution attended by each
8 foster youth who receive a grant, and (5) annual retention and graduation
9 data on foster youth receiving a grant. The report shall not contain the
10 specific identity of any foster youth that is eligible for or awarded a
11 grant.

12 Sec. 6. The commission may adopt and promulgate rules and
13 regulations to carry out the Fostering Independence Higher Education
14 Grant Act.