
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 1224 Session of
2017

INTRODUCED BY SAINATO, BARRAR, PASHINSKI, KINSEY, JAMES,
DRISCOLL, LONGIETTI, READSHAW, CONKLIN, D. COSTA, RYAN,
DeLUCA, PETRARCA AND FARRY, APRIL 17, 2017

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS, APRIL 17, 2017

AN ACT

1 Amending Title 35 (Health and Safety) of the Pennsylvania
2 Consolidated Statutes, in incentives for municipal volunteers
3 of fire companies and nonprofit emergency medical services
4 agencies, establishing the First Responder Loan Forgiveness
5 Program; and making editorial changes.

6 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
7 hereby enacts as follows:

8 Section 1. Subchapter D heading of Chapter 79A of Title 35
9 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, added November 21,
10 2016 (P.L.1509, No.172), is amended to read:

11 SUBCHAPTER D

12 [MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS] PENALTIES

13 Section 2. Chapter 79A of Title 35 is amended by adding a
14 subchapter to read:

15 SUBCHAPTER E

16 FIRST RESPONDER LOAN FORGIVENESS

17 Sec.

18 79A41. Definitions.

1 79A42. First Responder Loan Forgiveness Program.

2 79A43. Award of loan forgiveness.

3 79A44. Amount of awards.

4 79A45. Funding.

5 79A46. Administration.

6 79A47. Point system.

7 79A48. Certification.

8 79A49. Guidelines.

9 § 79A41. Definitions.

10 The following words and phrases when used in this subchapter
11 shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
12 context clearly indicates otherwise:

13 "Active first responder." A member of an emergency medical
14 services agency or a member of a volunteer fire company or
15 volunteer rescue company.

16 "Agency." The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance
17 Agency.

18 "Approved institution of higher learning." A degree-granting
19 or certificate-granting educational institution, including a
20 vocational school, that:

21 (1) offers a postsecondary program of education;

22 (2) is located in this Commonwealth; and

23 (3) is approved by the Pennsylvania Higher Education
24 Assistance Agency.

25 "Approved program of education." A curriculum or course of
26 study pursued at an approved institution of higher learning as
27 determined by the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance
28 Agency.

29 "Emergency medical services agency." An emergency medical
30 service corporation, association or organization which meets all

1 of the following:

2 (1) Is located in this Commonwealth.

3 (2) Is licensed by the Department of Health.

4 (3) Is regularly engaged in the provision of emergency
5 medical services, including basic life support or advanced
6 life support services and advanced life support squads as
7 defined in 28 Pa. Code § 1027.1 (relating to general
8 provisions) and licensed quick response services.

9 "Program." The First Responder Loan Forgiveness Program
10 established in section 79A42 (relating to First Responder Loan
11 Forgiveness Program).

12 "Qualified applicant." An active first responder who
13 qualifies for loan forgiveness under section 79A43 (relating to
14 award of loan forgiveness).

15 "Volunteer fire company." A nonprofit chartered corporation,
16 association or organization located in this Commonwealth which
17 provides fire protection or rescue services and which may offer
18 other voluntary emergency services within this Commonwealth.
19 Voluntary emergency services provided by a volunteer fire
20 company may include voluntary ambulance and voluntary rescue
21 services.

22 "Volunteer rescue company." A nonprofit chartered
23 corporation, association or organization located in this
24 Commonwealth that provides emergency rescue services.

25 § 79A42. First Responder Loan Forgiveness Program.

26 (a) Program established.--The First Responder Loan
27 Forgiveness Program is established. The program shall provide
28 loan forgiveness awards to qualified applicants in accordance
29 with this subchapter. The agency shall administer the program
30 for active first responders on a Statewide basis.

1 (b) Applicants.--An active first responder who meets the
2 following criteria may apply to the agency for loan forgiveness
3 under the program:

4 (1) Is a resident of this Commonwealth.

5 (2) Has been an active first responder, as certified in
6 accordance with section 79A48 (relating to certification),
7 for a period of at least one year in this Commonwealth.

8 (3) Has enrolled as a student in an approved program of
9 education.

10 (4) Provides the approved institution of higher learning
11 with a sworn or official statement by the Office of the State
12 Fire Commissioner or the chief or president of the emergency
13 medical services agency, attesting that the applicant is a
14 member in good standing of the emergency medical services
15 agency, volunteer fire company or volunteer rescue company.
16 § 79A43. Award of loan forgiveness.

17 The agency may provide loan forgiveness for an active first
18 responder who, in the first year as an active first responder
19 following completion of a postsecondary degree or certification
20 program and, in each subsequent year, meets all of the following
21 criteria:

22 (1) Is a recipient of an agency-administered, federally
23 insured student loan.

24 (2) Has completed a certificate or degree program at an
25 approved institution of higher learning. The certificate or
26 degree program must be an approved program of education.

27 (3) Is certified as an active first responder, by the
28 Bureau of Emergency Medical Services or the Office of the
29 State Fire Commissioner, for four consecutive years preceding
30 the date of application.

1 (4) Executes a sworn affidavit, under penalty of
2 perjury, that the individual does not have a delinquent
3 payment owing to any Commonwealth agency.

4 § 79A44. Amount of awards.

5 (a) Loan forgiveness.--Agency-administered, federally
6 insured student loans for an approved program of education
7 provided to a qualified applicant may be forgiven by the agency
8 as follows:

9 (1) The agency may forgive a qualified applicant's loan
10 in an amount up to \$16,000.

11 (2) Payment of the award shall be made in accordance
12 with the procedures established by the agency.

13 (3) A qualified applicant may receive loan forgiveness
14 awards as follows:

15 (i) First year of active first responder status
16 following graduation in an amount up to \$4,000, but not
17 exceeding 25% of the original qualifying loans.

18 (ii) Second year of active first responder status
19 following graduation in an amount up to \$4,000, but not
20 exceeding 25% of the original qualifying loans.

21 (iii) Third year of active first responder status
22 following graduation in an amount up to \$8,000, but not
23 exceeding 50% of the original qualifying loans.

24 (b) Preference.--The agency may give preference in approving
25 loan forgiveness awards under the program to renewal
26 applications.

27 § 79A45. Funding.

28 The agency may approve loan forgiveness awards only to the
29 extent that funds are appropriated by the General Assembly and
30 are sufficient to cover administration of the program. In the

1 event that funding is insufficient to fully fund administration
2 and awards to all qualified applicants, the agency shall prorate
3 loan forgiveness awards.

4 § 79A46. Administration.

5 The agency shall promulgate regulations and adopt policies,
6 procedures and forms as are necessary and not inconsistent with
7 the provisions of this subchapter.

8 § 79A47. Point system.

9 (a) General rule.--A point system establishing the
10 requirements for annual certification of active first responders
11 shall be developed and implemented by the chief or president of:

12 (1) a volunteer fire company;

13 (2) a volunteer rescue company; and

14 (3) an emergency medical services agency.

15 (b) Factors.--The point system shall be used to determine
16 whether to certify an individual as an active first responder
17 and shall include the following factors:

18 (1) The number of emergency calls to which the
19 individual responded.

20 (2) The individual's level of training and participation
21 in formal training.

22 (3) Time spent by the individual on administration and
23 support activities, including maintenance of facilities and
24 equipment.

25 (4) Involvement by the individual in other projects that
26 directly benefit the organization's financial viability,
27 emergency response or operational readiness.

28 § 79A48. Certification.

29 (a) Application.--An applicant for certification as an
30 active first responder must submit a signed application to the

1 chief or president of the volunteer fire company, volunteer
2 rescue company or emergency medical services agency that the
3 applicant serves.

4 (b) Local sign-off.--The chief or president of the volunteer
5 fire company or volunteer rescue company and another officer of
6 the volunteer fire company or volunteer rescue company, or the
7 chief or president of the emergency medical services agency and
8 another officer of the emergency medical services agency, shall:

9 (1) Sign the application attesting to the individual's
10 status as an active first responder.

11 (2) Forward the application to the Office of the State
12 Fire Commissioner or the Department of Health for final
13 review and processing.

14 § 79A49. Guidelines.

15 The agency shall adopt guidelines, including forms, necessary
16 to administer this subchapter.

17 Section 3. This act shall take effect in 60 days.