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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION - RHODE ISLAND PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP

Introduced By: Representatives Chippendale, Filippi, Newberry, Nardone, and Place

Date Introduced: February 15, 2021

Referred To: House Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Sections 16-107-2, 16-107-4 and 16-107-6 of the General Laws in Chapter
2 16-107 entitled "Rhode Island Promise Scholarship" are hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **16-107-2. Legislative findings and purpose.**

4 (a) The general assembly finds and declares that:

5 (1) Education is critical for the state's young people to achieve their dreams and develop
6 their talents;

7 (2) The state's economic success depends on a highly educated and skilled workforce; ~~and~~

8 (3) The state's future prosperity depends upon its ability to make educational opportunities
9 beyond high school available for all students as part of a free public education; ~~and~~

10 (4) Students with disabilities shall have access to the educational opportunities of this
11 chapter afforded other eligible students.

12 (b) In order to address the findings set forth in subsection (a), the purpose of this chapter
13 is to increase the number of students enrolling in and completing degrees on time from the
14 community college of Rhode Island.

15 **16-107-4. Definitions.**

16 When used in this chapter, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

17 (1) "FAFSA" means the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form;

18 (2) "Mandatory fees and tuition" are the costs that every student is required to pay in order
19 to enroll in classes, and does not include room and board, textbooks, program fees that may exist

1 in some majors, course fees that may exist for some specific courses, meal plans, or travel;

2 (3) "On track to graduate on time" means the standards determined by the community
3 college of Rhode Island in establishing the expectation of a student to graduate with an associate's
4 degree within two (2) years of enrollment (recognizing that some students, including students who
5 require developmental education, are double majors, or are enrolled in certain professional
6 programs may require an extended time period for degree completion);

7 (4) "Scholarship program" means the Rhode Island promise scholarship program that is
8 established pursuant to § 16-107-3;

9 (5) "Recipient student" means a student attending the community college of Rhode Island
10 who qualifies to receive the Rhode Island promise scholarship pursuant to § 16-107-6; ~~and~~

11 (6) "State" means the state of Rhode Island ~~and Providence Plantations;~~

12 (7) "Disabled student" means any student otherwise eligible pursuant to § 16-107-6 who
13 has a physical, developmental or hidden disability or disabilities, as defined in § 42-87-1, that
14 would create a hardship or other functional obstacles preventing participation in this program; and

15 (8) "ADA" means the Americans with Disabilities Act as may be amended from time to
16 time;

17 (9) "Reasonable accommodations" means any necessary modifications to this chapter as
18 required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, ("ADA") and section 504 of the Rehabilitation
19 Act of 1973 as may be amended from time to time.

20 **16-107-6. Eligibility for scholarship.**

21 (a) Beginning with the students who enroll at the community college of Rhode Island in
22 the fall of 2017 and ending with students who enroll at the community college of Rhode Island in
23 the fall of 2021, to be considered for the scholarship, a student:

24 (1) Must qualify for in-state tuition and fees pursuant to the residency policy adopted by
25 the council on postsecondary education, as amended, supplemented, restated, or otherwise modified
26 from time to time ("residency policy"); provided, that, the student must have satisfied the high
27 school graduation/equivalency diploma condition prior to reaching nineteen (19) years of age;
28 provided, further, that in addition to the option of meeting the requirement by receiving a high
29 school equivalency diploma as described in the residency policy, the student can satisfy the
30 condition by receiving other certificates or documents of equivalent nature from the state or its
31 municipalities as recognized by applicable regulations promulgated by the council on elementary
32 and secondary education;

33 (2) Must be admitted to, and must enroll and attend the community college of Rhode Island
34 on a full-time basis by the semester immediately following high school graduation or the semester

1 immediately following receipt of a high school equivalency diploma;

2 (3) Must complete the FAFSA and any required FAFSA verification by the deadline
3 prescribed by the community college of Rhode Island for each year in which the student seeks to
4 receive funding under the scholarship program;

5 (4) Must continue to be enrolled on a full-time basis;

6 (5) Must maintain an average annual cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or
7 greater, as determined by the community college of Rhode Island;

8 (6) Must remain on track to graduate on time as determined by the community college of
9 Rhode Island;

10 (7) Must not have already received an award under this scholarship program; and

11 (8) Must commit to live, work, or continue their education in Rhode Island after graduation.

12 The community college of Rhode Island shall develop a policy that will secure this
13 commitment from recipient students.

14 (b) Notwithstanding the eligibility requirements under subsection (a) of this section
15 ("specified conditions"):

16 (i) In the case of a recipient student who has an approved medical or personal leave of
17 absence or is unable to satisfy one or more specified conditions because of the student's medical or
18 personal circumstances, the student may continue to receive an award under the scholarship
19 program upon resuming the student's education so long as the student continues to meet all other
20 applicable eligibility requirements; ~~and~~

21 (ii) In the case of a recipient student who is a member of the national guard or a member
22 of a reserve unit of a branch of the United States military and is unable to satisfy one or more
23 specified conditions because the student is or will be in basic or special military training, or is or
24 will be participating in a deployment of the student's guard or reserve unit, the student may continue
25 to receive an award under the scholarship program upon completion of the student's basic or special
26 military training or deployment; ~~and~~ and

27 (iii) Any disabled student, otherwise eligible as of May 15, 2021, shall be entitled to access
28 to this program and shall be afforded all reasonable accommodations, as defined in the ADA and
29 the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, including enrolling on a part-time basis.

30 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

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RELATING TO EDUCATION - RHODE ISLAND PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP

1 This act would provide that students with disabilities shall be eligible to participate in the
2 state's promise scholarship program and provided with reasonable accommodations to access the
3 opportunities.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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