

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

FOR

SENATE BILL NO. 71

AN ACT

To amend chapter 173, RSMo, by adding thereto two new sections relating to college tuition for public safety personnel.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Missouri, as follows:

Section A. Chapter 173, RSMo, is amended by adding thereto two new sections, to be known as sections 173.2655 and 173.2660, to read as follows:

173.2655. 1. This section and section 173.2660 shall be known and may be cited as the "Public Safety Recruitment and Retention Act".

2. For purposes of this section and section 173.2660, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, the following terms mean:

(1) "Advanced emergency medical technician", as such term is defined in section 190.100;

(2) "Department", the department of higher education and workforce development;

(3) "Emergency medical dispatcher", as such term is defined in section 190.100;

(4) "Emergency medical technician", as such term is defined in section 190.100;

(5) "Firefighter", any officer or employee of a fire department who is employed for the purpose of fighting fires, excluding volunteer firefighters and anyone employed in a clerical or other capacity not involving fire-fighting duties;

(6) "Legal dependent", as such term is defined by the United States Department of Education for purposes of the Free Application for Student Financial Aid;

(7) "Line of duty", any action that public safety personnel is authorized or obligated by law, rule, or regulation to perform, related to or as a condition of employment or service;

(8) "Open seat", a vacant position in a class, course, or program that is available for enrollment, and which may become available when a student drops out or transfers, or when a class, course, or program has unused capacity, allowing new students to register or enroll;

(9) "Paramedic", as such term is defined in section 190.100;

(10) "Police officer", any person who, by virtue of office or public employment, is vested by law with the power and duty to make arrests for violation of the laws of the state of Missouri or ordinances of any municipality thereof, while acting within the scope of his or her authority as an employee of a public law enforcement agency, as such term is defined in section 590.1040;

(11) "Public institution of higher education", a public community college, state college, or state university;

(12) "Public safety personnel", includes any police officer, firefighter, paramedic, emergency medical dispatcher, emergency medical technician, or advanced emergency medical technician who is trained and authorized by law or rule to render emergency medical assistance or treatment;

(13) "Tuition", the charges and cost of tuition as set by the governing body of a public institution of higher education, excluding the costs of room, board, books, and any other educational materials, equipment, or supplies.

3. Subject to appropriation, public safety personnel with at least six years of service shall be entitled to a waiver of one hundred percent of the resident tuition charges of a public institution of higher education if the individual:

(1) Possesses one of the following:

(a) A current, valid license issued by the department of health and senior services authorizing such person to serve as an emergency medical technician, advanced emergency medical technician, or paramedic;

(b) A current, valid license issued by the peace officer standards and training commission authorizing such person to serve as a peace officer pursuant to the provisions of chapter 590;

(c) A current, valid certificate issued by the division of fire safety authorizing such person to serve as a firefighter; or

(d) A current, valid certificate confirming successful completion of an emergency medical dispatcher course and any ongoing training requirements pursuant to section 650.340; and

(e) For all public safety personnel, a certificate of verification signed by the individual's supervisor or employer verifying that such individual is currently employed full-time as public safety personnel and trained and authorized by law or rule to render emergency medical assistance or treatment;

(2) Meets all admission requirements of the public institution of higher education;

(3) Has not already earned a baccalaureate degree;

(4) Pursues studies leading to an associate degree or baccalaureate degree in one of the following academic subject areas:

(a) For police officers, eligible subjects include forensic science, fisheries and wildlife, political science, psychology, history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, global studies, Spanish, journalism, advertising, public relations, nutrition and health sciences, communication sciences and disorders, and criminal justice;

(b) For firefighters, paramedics, emergency medical technicians, and advanced emergency medical technicians, eligible subjects include biology, chemistry, biochemistry, microbiology, nutrition and health sciences, communication sciences and disorders, Spanish, advertising, public relations, paramedicine, fire science, fire technology, fire administration, fire management, communications, homeland security, emergency management, disaster management, and crisis management; and

(c) For emergency medical dispatchers, eligible subjects include any subject specified in paragraph (a) or (b) of this subdivision;

(5) Submits verification of the professional license or certificate and the certificate of verification required by subdivision (1) of this subsection to the department, in a form and manner as prescribed by the department;

(6) Files with the department documentation showing proof of employment as public safety personnel and proof of residence in Missouri each year such individual or such individual's legal dependent applies for and receives the tuition waiver;

(7) First applies for all other forms of federal and state student financial aid before applying for a tuition waiver, including, but not limited to, the United States Department of Education Free Application for Federal Student Aid; and

(8) Submits a document to the public institution of higher education confirming that the public safety personnel has satisfied the provisions of subdivision (7) of this subsection, to be submitted in a form and manner as prescribed by the public institution of higher education.

4. Public safety personnel may receive the tuition waiver pursuant to subsection 3 of this section for up to five years if they otherwise continue to be eligible for the tuition waiver. The five years of tuition waiver eligibility starts once the individual applies for and receives the tuition waiver for the first time and is available to such individual for the next five consecutive years.

5. Subject to appropriation, a legal dependent of public safety personnel with at least ten years of service shall be entitled to a tuition waiver of one hundred percent of the resident tuition charges of any public institution of higher education for an associate or baccalaureate degree program if such public safety personnel satisfies the provisions of subdivisions (1), (5), and (6) of subsection 3 of this section and the legal dependent:

(1) Executes an agreement with such institution in accordance with the provisions of section 173.2660;

(2) Has not previously earned a baccalaureate degree;

(3) Meets all admission requirements of the public institution of higher education;

(4) First applies for all other forms of federal and state student financial aid before applying for a tuition waiver, including, but not limited to, the United States Department of Education Free Application for Federal Student Aid;

(5) Submits a document to the public institution of higher education confirming that the legal dependent has

satisfied subdivision (4) of this subsection, to be submitted in a form and manner as prescribed by the public institution of higher education;

(6) Submits the verification required pursuant to subsection 8 of this section to the public institution of higher education; and

(7) Pursues studies leading to an associate degree or baccalaureate degree in any one of the subject areas specified in paragraphs (a) to (c) subdivision (4) of subsection 3 of this section.

6. A legal dependent may receive the tuition waiver for up to five years if the public safety personnel and the legal dependent continue to be eligible for such tuition waiver. The five years of tuition waiver eligibility starts once the legal dependent applies for and receives the tuition waiver for the first time and is available to such legal dependent for the next five consecutive years.

7. The public institution of higher education shall waive one hundred percent of the public safety personnel's or the legal dependent's tuition remaining due after subtracting awarded federal financial aid grants and state scholarships and grants for the eligible public safety personnel or legal dependent during the time the public safety personnel or legal dependent is enrolled. To remain eligible, the public safety personnel or legal dependent shall comply with all requirements of the institution for continued attendance and award of an associate degree or a baccalaureate degree.

8. (1) An application for a tuition waiver shall include a verification of the public safety personnel's satisfaction of the requirements of subdivisions (1), (5), and (6) of subsection 3 of this section. The public safety personnel shall include such verification when he or she or

his or her legal dependent is applying to the public institution of higher education in order to obtain a tuition waiver upon initial enrollment.

(2) The death of public safety personnel in the line of duty which occurs after submission of an application for a tuition waiver shall not disqualify such individual's otherwise eligible legal dependent from receiving the tuition waiver. In such case, in lieu of submitting the certificate of verification provided for in subdivision (1) of this subsection, the legal dependent shall submit a statement attesting that:

(a) At the time of death, such public safety personnel satisfied the requirements of subdivision (1) of this subsection; and

(b) Such public safety personnel died in the line of duty.

9. A public institution of higher education shall provide a tuition waiver to public safety personnel and legal dependents who satisfy the provisions of this section and section 173.2660, if applicable, and apply for an open seat, but shall not be required to provide a tuition waiver if doing so would require the institution to create additional seats exceeding class, course, or program capacity.

10. Within forty-five days after receipt of a completed application for a tuition waiver, the public institution of higher education shall send written notice of the applicant's eligibility or ineligibility for the tuition waiver and state whether the application has been approved or denied. If the applicant is determined not to be eligible for the tuition waiver, the notice shall include the reason or reasons for such determination. If the application is

denied, the notice shall include the reason or reasons for the denial.

11. The department shall promulgate rules to implement the provisions of this section and section 173.2660. Any rule or portion of a rule, as that term is defined in section 536.010, that is created under the authority delegated in this section shall become effective only if it complies with and is subject to all of the provisions of chapter 536 and, if applicable, section 536.028. This section and chapter 536 are nonseverable and if any of the powers vested with the general assembly pursuant to chapter 536 to review, to delay the effective date, or to disapprove and annul a rule are subsequently held unconstitutional, then the grant of rulemaking authority and any rule proposed or adopted after August 28, 2025, shall be invalid and void.

12. (1) There is hereby created in the state treasury the "Public Safety Recruitment and Retention Fund", which shall consist of moneys appropriated by the general assembly for the purpose of implementing the provisions of this section and section 173.2660. The state treasurer shall be custodian of the fund. In accordance with sections 30.170 and 30.180, the state treasurer may approve disbursements. The fund shall be a dedicated fund and money in the fund shall be used solely by the department of higher education and workforce development for the purpose of reimbursing public institutions of higher education for tuition waivers awarded as provided in this section and 173.2660.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 33.080 to the contrary, any moneys remaining in the fund at the end of the biennium shall not revert to the credit of the general revenue fund.

(3) The state treasurer shall invest moneys in the fund in the same manner as other funds are invested. Any

interest and moneys earned on such investments shall be credited to the fund.

13. In any year in which moneys in the public safety recruitment and retention fund are insufficient to fully fund tuition waivers for all eligible applicants, tuition waivers shall be awarded in the following order of priority; provided that, in the event of a tie in eligibility, available funds shall be distributed on a pro rata basis:

(1) Priority class one shall include public safety personnel, in the following order:

(a) Public safety personnel in departments with the highest crime rate per capita; and

(b) Public safety personnel with the most years of service; and

(2) Priority class two shall include dependents of public safety personnel, in the following order:

(a) Dependents of public safety personnel in departments with the highest crime rate per capita; and

(b) Dependents of public safety personnel with the most years of service.

14. The tuition waivers provided for in this section and section 173.2660 are subject to appropriation. If there are no moneys in the fund established in subsection 12 of this section, no tuition waivers shall be awarded.

173.2660. 1. Each legal dependent who is a tuition waiver recipient pursuant to the provisions of section 173.2655 shall execute an agreement as provided in this section. Such agreement shall include the following terms, as appropriate:

(1) The tuition waiver recipient agrees to reside within the state of Missouri for a period of five years following the use of the tuition waiver;

(2) Each year during the five-year period following use of the tuition waiver, the tuition waiver recipient agrees to file a state income tax return and provide a copy of such tax return to the department to document that such recipient still resides in the state of Missouri;

(3) If the tuition waiver recipient fails to annually file a tax return to prove residency in the state of Missouri for the five-year period following the use of the tuition waiver or fails to remain a resident of Missouri for the five-year period following the use of the tuition waiver, the tuition waiver recipient agrees to repay the public institution of higher education attended by such tuition waiver recipient the amount of tuition that was waived for such individual if the public institution of higher education requests such payment on the dates and in the amounts requested. Any repayment received by a public institution of higher education pursuant to this subdivision shall be remitted by such institution to the department in full or deducted from future reimbursements to such institution from the fund established in subsection 12 of section 173.2655, as determined in accordance with rules promulgated by the department; and

(4) Any residency, filing, or payment obligation incurred by the tuition waiver recipient under the public safety recruitment and retention act is canceled in the event of the tuition waiver recipient's total and permanent disability or death.

2. The five-year residency requirement begins once the legal dependent applies for and receives the tuition waiver for the first time and continues until the tuition waiver recipient's:

(1) Completion of the five-year tuition waiver eligibility period;

(2) Completion of a baccalaureate degree at a public institution of higher education;

(3) Completion of an associate degree at a public community college and notification to the department that such recipient does not intend to pursue a baccalaureate degree or additional associate degree using tuition waivers pursuant to the public safety recruitment and retention act;
or

(4) Notification to the department that such recipient does not plan to use additional tuition waivers pursuant to the public safety recruitment and retention act.