
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 111 Session of
2015

INTRODUCED BY FARNESE, FONTANA, BREWSTER, COSTA, SMITH, HUGHES,
YUDICHAK AND WILLIAMS, FEBRUARY 12, 2015

REFERRED TO EDUCATION, FEBRUARY 12, 2015

AN ACT

1 Providing for Pennsylvania Pathways to College Act, for grant
2 program, for grant application, for use of funds, for
3 technical assistance, for reporting requirements, for
4 reporting of data, for evaluations by grantees and for
5 report; imposing duties on the Department of Education; and
6 making an appropriation.

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

9 Section 1. Short title.

10 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Pennsylvania
11 Pathways to College Act.

12 Section 2. Definitions.

13 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
14 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
15 context clearly indicates otherwise:

16 "College-going rate." The percentage of high school
17 graduates who enroll at an institution of higher education in
18 the school year immediately following graduation from high
19 school.

20 "Department." The Department of Education of the

1 Commonwealth.

2 "Eligible school entity." A school entity in which a
3 majority of the high schools served by the school entity are
4 high-need high schools.

5 "High-need high school." A high school in which not less
6 than 50% of the students enrolled in the school are:

7 (1) eligible to receive free or reduced price meals
8 under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (60
9 Stat. 230, 42 U.S.C. § 1751 et seq.);

10 (2) eligible to be counted under section 1124(c) of the
11 Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law
12 89-10, 20 U.S.C. § 6333(c)); or

13 (3) members of families eligible for public assistance
14 under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

15 "High school." A public high school in a school district
16 located in this Commonwealth and an area vocational-technical
17 school located in this Commonwealth.

18 "High school graduation rate." The percentage of students
19 who graduate from high school with a regular diploma in the
20 standard number of years, as defined under 34 C.F.R. § 200.19(b)
21 (1) (relating to other academic indicators).

22 "Institution of higher education." As defined in section
23 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-329,
24 20 U.S.C. § 1001(a)).

25 "School entity." A school district or area vocational-
26 technical school.

27 Section 3. Grant program.

28 (a) Competitive grants.--The department may award grants on
29 a competitive basis to eligible school entities to carry out the
30 activities described in this act.

1 (b) Duration.--A grant awarded under this act shall be four
2 years in duration.

3 (c) Distribution.--In awarding grants under this act, the
4 department shall ensure that the grants are distributed among
5 the different geographic regions of this Commonwealth and among
6 eligible school entities serving urban and rural areas.

7 Section 4. Grant application.

8 (a) Eligible school entity.--An eligible school entity
9 desiring a grant under this act shall submit an application to
10 the department at the time, in the manner and accompanied by the
11 information as the department may reasonably require.

12 (b) Contents.--An application submitted under subsection (a)
13 shall include a description of the program to be carried out
14 with grant funds and:

15 (1) a description of the high school population to be
16 targeted by the program, the particular college-access needs
17 of the population and the resources available for meeting the
18 needs;

19 (2) an outline of the objectives of the program,
20 including goals for increasing the number of college
21 applications submitted by each student and the number of
22 students submitting applications, increasing Free Application
23 for Federal Student Aid completion rates and increasing
24 school-wide college-going rates across the school entity;

25 (3) a description of the school entity's plan to work
26 cooperatively, where applicable, with programs funded under
27 Chapters 1 and 2 of Subpart 2 of Part A of Title IV of the
28 Higher Education Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-329, 20 U.S.C. §§
29 1070a-11 et seq. and 1070a-21 et seq.), including the extent
30 to which the school entity commits to sharing facilities,

1 providing access to students and developing compatible record
2 keeping systems;

3 (4) a description of the activities, services and
4 training to be provided by the program, including a plan to
5 provide structure and support for the students in the college
6 search, planning and application process;

7 (5) a description of the methods to be used to evaluate
8 the outcomes and effectiveness of the program;

9 (6) an assurance that grant funds will be used to
10 supplement and not supplant other Federal, State or local
11 funds available to carry out activities of the type carried
12 out under the grant;

13 (7) an explanation of the method used for calculating
14 college enrollment rates for each high school served by the
15 eligible school entity that is based on externally verified
16 data;

17 (8) a plan to make the program sustainable over time,
18 including the use of matching funds from Federal and local
19 sources; and

20 (9) a description of the school entity's plan to work
21 cooperatively, where applicable, with the program funded
22 under Part H of Title VIII of the Higher Education Act of
23 1965 (Public Law 89-329, 20 U.S.C. § 1161h et seq.),
24 including the extent to which the school entity commits to
25 using and leveraging:

26 (i) the needs assessment and recommendations;

27 (ii) the model for measuring college enrollment; and

28 (iii) comprehensive services.

29 (c) Method of calculating enrollment rate.--The following
30 apply:

1 (1) A method included in an application under subsection
2 (b) (7):

3 (i) shall, at a minimum, track students' first-time
4 enrollment in an institution of higher education; and
5 (ii) may track progress toward completion of a
6 postsecondary degree.

7 (2) An eligible school entity may develop a method under
8 subsection (b) (7) in conjunction with an existing public or
9 private entity that currently maintains the method.

10 (d) Special consideration.--In awarding a grant under this
11 act, the department shall give special consideration to an
12 application from an eligible school entity serving schools with
13 the highest percentages of poverty.

14 Section 5. Use of funds.

15 (a) Eligible school entities.--An eligible school entity
16 that receives a grant under this act shall develop and implement
17 or expand a program to increase the number of low-income
18 students who enroll in postsecondary educational institutions,
19 including institutions with competitive admissions criteria.

20 (b) Requirements for programs.--A program funded under this
21 act shall:

22 (1) provide professional development to high school
23 teachers and school counselors in postsecondary education
24 advising;

25 (2) implement a comprehensive college guidance program
26 for the students in a high school served by an eligible
27 school district under this act that:

28 (i) ensures that all students and their parents or
29 guardians are regularly notified throughout the students'
30 time in high school, beginning in the first year of high

1 school, of:
2 (A) high school graduation requirements;
3 (B) college entrance requirements;
4 (C) the economic and social benefits of higher
5 education;

6 (D) college expenses, including information
7 about expenses by institutional type, differences
8 between sticker price and net price and expenses
9 beyond tuition; and

10 (E) the resources for paying for college,
11 including the availability, eligibility and variety
12 of financial aid;

13 (ii) provides assistance to students in registering
14 for and preparing for college entrance tests;

15 (iii) provides one-on-one guidance and assistance to
16 students in applying to an institution of higher
17 education and in applying for Federal financial aid
18 assistance and other State, local and private financial
19 aid assistance and scholarships; and

20 (iv) provides not less than one meeting for each
21 student, not later than the first semester of the first
22 year of high school with a school counselor college
23 access personnel, including personnel involved in
24 programs funded under Chapters 1 and 2 of Subpart 2 of
25 Part A of Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965
26 (Public Law 89-329, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1070a-11 et seq. and
27 1070a-21 et seq.), trained teacher or other professional
28 or organization such as a community-based organization,
29 approved by the school to discuss postsecondary options,
30 outline postsecondary goals and create a plan to achieve

1 the goals, and provides not less than two meetings in
2 each subsequent year to discuss progress on the plan; and
3 (3) ensure that each high school served by the eligible
4 school entity develops a comprehensive, school-wide plan of
5 action to strengthen the college-going culture within the
6 high school.

7 (c) Allowable use of program funds.--A program funded under
8 this act may:

9 (1) establish postsecondary planning classes for high
10 school students to assist in the college preparation and
11 application process;

12 (2) hire and train postsecondary coaches with expertise
13 in the college-going process to supplement and not supplant
14 existing school counselors by providing high school students
15 with assistance in the college-going process;

16 (3) increase the number of school counselors who
17 specialize in the college-going process by serving students;

18 (4) train student leaders to assist in the creation of a
19 college-going culture in their schools;

20 (5) establish partnerships with programs funded under
21 Chapters 1 and 2 of Subpart 2 of Part A of Title IV of the
22 Higher Education Act of 1965, and with community and
23 nonprofit organizations to increase college-going rates at
24 high schools served by the eligible school entity;

25 (6) provide long-term postsecondary follow up with
26 graduates of the high schools served by the eligible school
27 entities, including increasing alumni involvement in
28 mentoring and advising roles within the high school;

29 (7) deliver college and career planning curriculum as a
30 stand-alone course, or embedded in other classes, or

1 delivered through the guidance curriculum by the school
2 counselor for all students in high school;

3 (8) create or maintain a postsecondary access center in
4 the school setting that provides information on colleges and
5 universities, career opportunities and financial aid options;
6 and

7 (9) in the comprehensive college guidance program
8 implemented under subsection (b)(2), provide opportunities
9 for students to explore postsecondary opportunities outside
10 of the school setting, such as college fairs, career fairs,
11 college tours, workplace visits or other similar activities.

12 (d) Requirement.--Grant funds made available under this act
13 shall be used to supplement and not supplant other Federal,
14 State and local funds available to carry out the activities
15 described in this act.

16 Section 6. Technical assistance.

17 The department shall provide technical assistance to grantees
18 in carrying out this act. The technical assistance shall:

19 (1) provide assistance in the calculation and analysis
20 of college-going rates for the grant recipients; and

21 (2) provide an annual analysis to each grant recipient
22 recommending best practices based on a comparison of the
23 recipient's data with that of high schools with similar
24 demographics and resources.

25 Section 7. Reporting requirements.

26 An eligible school entity receiving a grant under this act
27 shall collect and report annually to the department the
28 information for the school entity and for a high school assisted
29 under this act on the results of the activities assisted under
30 the grant as the department may reasonably require, including

1 information on:

2 (1) the number and percentage of students who enroll in
3 an institution of higher education in the school year
4 immediately following the students' high school graduation as
5 measured by externally verified school-wide college
6 enrollment data;

7 (2) the number and percentage of students who graduate
8 from high school on time with a regular high school diploma;

9 (3) the number and percentage of students at each grade
10 level who are on track to graduate from high school on time
11 and with a regular high school diploma;

12 (4) the number and percentage of senior high school
13 students who apply to an institution of higher education and
14 the average number of applications completed and submitted by
15 students;

16 (5) the number and percentage of senior high school
17 students who file the Free Application for Federal Student
18 Aid forms;

19 (6) the number and percentage of students in grade 10
20 who take early admissions assessments such as the Preliminary
21 Scholastic Aptitude Test;

22 (7) the number and percentage of students in grades 11
23 and 12 who take the Scholastic Aptitude Test or American
24 College Testing examination and the students' mean scores on
25 the assessments;

26 (8) where data are available, the number and percentage
27 of students enrolled in remedial mathematics or English
28 courses during their freshman year at an institution of
29 higher education;

30 (9) the number and percentage of students in grades 11

1 and 12 enrolled in not less than two of the following:

2 (i) a dual credit course; or

3 (ii) an Advanced Placement or International
4 Baccalaureate course; and

5 (10) the number and percentage of students who scored
6 proficient or advanced on Pennsylvania System of School
7 Assessment tests in mathematics, science and English language
8 arts.

9 Section 8. Reporting of data.

10 An eligible school entity receiving a grant under this act
11 shall report to the department where possible the data required
12 under section 7. Where available, the data shall be
13 disaggregated by categories, including gender, race, ethnicity
14 and age.

15 Section 9. Evaluations by grantees.

16 An eligible school entity that receives a grant under this
17 act shall:

18 (1) conduct periodic evaluations of the effectiveness of
19 the activities carried out under the grant toward increasing
20 school-wide college-going rates;

21 (2) use the evaluations under paragraph (1) to refine
22 and improve activities conducted with the grant and the
23 performance measures for the activities; and

24 (3) make the results of the evaluations under paragraph
25 (1) publicly available, including by providing public notice
26 of the availability.

27 Section 10. Report.

28 The department shall:

29 (1) conduct an independent evaluation, by grant or
30 contract of the programs carried out under this act. The

1 evaluation shall include an assessment of the impact of the
2 program on high school graduation rates and college-going
3 rates; and

4 (2) prepare and submit a report on the results of the
5 evaluation described in paragraph (1) to the chairman and the
6 minority chairman of the Education Committee of the Senate
7 and the chairman and the minority chairman of the Education
8 Committee of the House of Representatives.

9 Section 11. Duties of department.

10 The department shall adopt procedures, rules and forms
11 necessary to implement this act.

12 Section 12. Appropriation.

13 The sum of \$25,000,000, or as much thereof as may be
14 necessary, is hereby appropriated to the department for the
15 fiscal years 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, to
16 carry out the provisions of this act.

17 Section 13. Effective date.

18 This act shall take effect in 60 days.