



DEPARTMENT OF AUDITS AND ACCOUNTS

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STATE AUDITOR
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March 22, 2018

Honorable Rick Jasperse
Chairman, Higher Education
401-H Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

SUBJECT: Fiscal Note
Senate Bill 354 (LC 39 1943S)

Dear Chairman Jasperse:

The bill would amend O.C.G.A. 20-3-519 relating to the Zell Miller Scholarship eligibility requirements for students who have completed a home study program or graduated from an ineligible high school. The bill would decrease the required ACT and SAT score for these incoming freshmen students from the ninety-third percentile to the ninety-second percentile. The bill would also classify active duty military personnel who physically reside in Georgia as in-state for Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) tuition purposes. Finally, the bill would require all public schools to post a sign with a phone number for reporting child abuse. The changes would be effective July 1, 2018.

Decreasing Required ACT and SAT Scores

The Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC) reported that FY 2017 data shows that nearly 100 home school and ineligible high school students currently qualify for the HOPE Scholarship but were ineligible for the Zell Miller Scholarship due to ACT or SAT scores below the ninety-third percentile. Lowering the required ACT or SAT score to the ninety-second percentile would allow fewer than 15 students to become immediately eligible for the Zell Miller Scholarship. Currently, these students may become eligible for the Zell Miller Scholarship if they have a 3.3 GPA at the end of 30 semester hours.

For those students who become eligible for the Zell Miller Scholarship at 30 semester hours, the bill would result in no additional costs. This is because the eligibility is retroactive, meaning the state pays the full tuition amount for the first 30 semester hours. The bill would simply shift the timing of the award payments. If any students do not have a 3.3 GPA at the end of 30 hours, the

state would incur an additional cost of approximately \$3,808 per student each year¹. This is the difference between the HOPE award they receive under current law and the Zell Miller Scholarship award they would receive under the bill.

It should be noted that the additional costs could be impacted by tuition increases that could result in a larger difference between the HOPE Scholarship awards and Zell Miller Scholarship awards.

Classifying Active Duty Personnel as In-State for Tuition Purposes

TCSG personnel stated that the bill's provision relating to active duty personnel paying in-state tuition is consistent with current system policy. There would be no additional state cost associated with codifying the policy.

Displaying Toll-Free Number to Report Child Abuse and Neglect

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) operates the toll-free number for reporting child abuse and neglect. Neither DFCS nor the Department of Education anticipate a fiscal impact to the state as a result of this bill.

Sincerely,



Greg S. Griffin
State Auditor



Teresa A. MacCartney, Director
Office of Planning and Budget

GSG/TAM/mt

¹ This is the average difference between the two awards across multiple schools.