



DOAA

Georgia Department
of Audits & Accounts

Greg S. Griffin
State Auditor

March 3, 2025

Honorable Chuck Martin
Chairman, Higher Education
State Capitol, Room 417-A
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

SUBJECT: Fiscal Note
House Bill 206 (LC 61 0090S)

Dear Chairman Martin,

The bill would amend the Drug-Free Postsecondary Education Act of 1990 and other provisions related to postsecondary education to remove the phrase “sale, possession, or use of marijuana, controlled substances, and dangerous drugs” but would make the manufacture, distribution, or sale of fentanyl cause for a student to be suspended or become ineligible for state funds for loans, grants, and scholarships. The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2025, and would be applicable to the 2025-2026 school year.

According to the University System of Georgia (USG) and Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), the bill would have no impact on existing policies. USG institutions already have rules and regulations consistent with local, state and federal law concerning drug use, manufacture, distribution, sale, and possession on campus, which would include fentanyl. They do not believe that the bill would change institutions’ policies or practices related to suspensions of students faced with drug convictions. TCSG also said that their campuses have rules and regulations regarding drugs on campus and do not anticipate the bill changing the policies.

Under the bill, students with drug convictions other than fentanyl-related convictions would not be ineligible for state-funded aid. While we were unable to determine the number of students who would be impacted by this provision, it would likely be a relatively small number. The Georgia Student Finance Commission does not have data on the number of potentially impacted students. TCSG and USG also do not track the number of students ineligible for state-funded aid for any type of drug conviction. USG did report that they believe there to have been minimal instances of students being denied aid, citing an example of one institution with two instances of HOPE denial due to a self-reported drug conviction in 25 years. The number of students who did not apply for HOPE or other state-funded aid because they knew they were ineligible is unknown.

As an example of the potential financial impact of students becoming eligible for state-funded aid, Table 1 provides the annual cost of HOPE for a small number of students. Our estimate that only a small number of students would be impacted is based on the USG statement and information related to drug convictions of juveniles discussed below. The amount per student is based on average award amounts across all USG institutions.

Table 1: Yearly Hope Scholarship Cost Impact

Number of Students	Yearly Cost
5	\$24,908
10	\$49,816
15	\$74,724

- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2023 there were about 1.5 million Georgians between the ages of 10-19.
- The Georgia Bureau of Investigation’s 2023 Crime Statistics Summary reported that 576 juveniles were arrested for possession of marijuana in 2023 and five were arrested for sale of marijuana. This represents roughly 0.04% of the juvenile population. Another 221 juvenile arrests for possession of other substances, and 103 arrests for sales of other substances. These represent approximately 0.02% of the population.
- Individuals with drug convictions other than fentanyl-related convictions would no longer be ineligible for state-funded aid under this bill, but they would still need to meet other requirements for the funding.

Respectfully,



Greg S. Griffin
State Auditor



Richard Dunn, Director
Office of Planning and Budget

GSG/RD/st