

HOUSE BILL NO. 482

INTRODUCED BY J. GILLETTE, J. CARLSON

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE MONTANA FOSTER YOUTH HIGHER EDUCATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM; AND PROVIDING A TERMINATION DATE."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

NEW SECTION. Section 1. Montana foster youth higher education assistance program -- administration -- eligible institutions. (1) (a) There is a Montana foster youth higher education assistance program administered by the board of regents through the commissioner of higher education for the purpose of helping youth who have aged out of the foster care system meet their educational, vocational, and professional goals without accruing debt.

(b) The Montana foster youth higher education assistance program shall allow and encourage each participating institution to develop a unique program to serve its eligible students pursuant to [section 2].

(c) The board of regents shall adopt policies for the administration of the program consistent with [sections 1 and 2].

(2) An educational or training institution is eligible for a program grant if it is a community or tribal college located in the state of Montana, a 2-year or 4-year institution of the Montana university system, or a publicly funded vocational training program.

(3) The legislature intends that institutions receiving grants pursuant to subsection (2) may reapply to the program for additional grants.

(4) In accordance with 5-11-210, the commissioner shall report annually to the education interim committee and the children, families, health, and human services interim committee on the status and impacts of the grants described in this section.

NEW SECTION. Section 2. Montana foster youth higher education assistance program -- program requirements -- student participant eligibility. (1) Institutions awarded a grant shall develop a

1 program that:

2 (a) serves students who are eligible participants pursuant to subsection (2);

3 (b) provides on-campus, year-round room and board, including meal plans, to participants from the
4 time they age out of foster care;

5 (c) provides support services to each participant, including help with admissions and enrollment,
6 assistance completing financial aid paperwork and scholarship applications, life skills training, academic
7 tutoring, job search and career assistance, and a community family or mentor for the purpose of creating a
8 family-like and nurturing connection in the community;

9 (d) provides last dollar scholarship awards, not to exceed the cost of attendance, based on each
10 term for which a student is eligible. The scholarship awards must be 50% funded by the Montana foster youth
11 higher education assistance program and the remaining 50% funded by private academic unit funds.

12 (2) To be considered an eligible participant, a student must:

13 (a) be eligible for the federal John H. Chafee foster care for successful transition to adulthood
14 program;

15 (b) be enrolled full time and taking courses that lead to:

16 (i) an associate or bachelor's degree offered by the institution; or

17 (ii) a vocational or entry-level professional credential or certification offered by the institution;

18 (c) have been a resident of Montana for at least 12 months prior to applying to the program;

19 (d) have graduated from high school or received a secondary education equivalency certificate;

20 and

21 (e) have completed and submitted the free application for federal student aid for the current
22 academic year and accepted all federal and state aid grants available.

23 (3) A participant shall:

24 (a) make satisfactory progress toward a degree or vocational or entry-level professional credential
25 or certification;

26 (b) maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.0;

27 (c) pay a nominal fee toward the cost of attendance, as determined by the institution;

28 (d) work a minimum of 10 hours per week from the second semester onward; and

1 (e) accept support services, including tutoring and life skills classes, offered by the institution.

2

3 NEW SECTION. Section 3. Codification instruction. [Sections 1 and 2] are intended to be codified
4 as an integral part of Title 20, chapter 26, part 6, and the provisions of Title 20, chapter 26, part 6, apply to
5 [sections 1 and 2].

6

7 NEW SECTION. Section 4. Termination. [Sections 1 and 2] terminate June 30, 2031. It is the intent
8 of the legislature to review the program before it terminates.

9

- END -