

SB175 INTRODUCED



1 6YXW3Z-1

2 By Senators Orr, Albritton, Livingston, Butler, Allen,

3 Waggoner, Roberts, Jones

4 RFD: Finance and Taxation Education

5 First Read: 05-Apr-23

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SYNOPSIS:

Existing law does not provide a financial incentive for an adult learner who has earned some college credits to return to college to complete their degree.

This bill would establish the ReEngage Alabama Grant Program, administered through the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, to provide grant award payments to assist eligible adult learners returning to college to complete a degree that is linked to Alabama's high demand workforce needs.

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

To establish the ReEngage Alabama Grant Program; to provide grant award payments to eligible adult learners; to provide eligibility standards, and to provide for administration by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.
BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. The purpose of the ReEngage Alabama Grant Program is to do all of the following:

- (1) Increase the number of Alabama adults with college



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29 degrees.

30 (2) Encourage adults who have earned some college
31 credit hours to return to college, enroll, and complete a
32 college degree program that is connected with workforce
33 development needs and aligned with Alabama's high demand
34 occupations list.

35 (3) Provide financial assistance to adult learners of
36 the state for postsecondary education in the state.

37 Section 2. For the purposes of this act the following
38 terms shall have the following meanings:

39 (1) ACADEMIC TERM. A portion of an academic year, such
40 as a quarter or semester, during which an institution of
41 higher education holds classes including, but not limited to,
42 fall, winter, spring, or summer semesters.

43 (2) ADULT LEARNER. An individual who is 25 years of age
44 or older and returning to college.

45 (3) ALABAMA RESIDENT. An individual who has been
46 classified as an in-state resident by an authorized
47 institution, who has established residency within this state
48 for at least a 12-month period prior to the beginning of the
49 term for which financial assistance is requested, and who is
50 in this state for other than a temporary purpose.

51 (4) APPROVED INSTITUTION. A state-supported institution
52 of higher education or a private nonprofit institution of
53 higher education that satisfies all of the following:

54 a. Is accredited by the Southern Association of
55 Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

56 b. Is eligible to receive Title IV federal student aid



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57 program funds.

58 c. Maintains its primary headquarters in Alabama.

59 (5) AUTHORIZED INSTITUTION. An approved institution
60 that files a signed agreement with the commission to comply
61 with all rules and procedures of the ReEngage Alabama Grant
62 Program as provided by the commission.

63 (6) COMMISSION. The Alabama Commission on Higher
64 Education.

65 (7) CONTINUOUS ENROLLMENT. When an adult learner is
66 making academic progress toward degree completion without a
67 stop-out in enrollment of more than one consecutive semester
68 or quarter, such as Fall/Winter to Spring, Spring to
69 Summer/Fall, or Summer to Fall.

70 (8) ELIGIBLE PROGRAM. A nonsectarian, secular
71 educational program that is aligned with Alabama's high demand
72 workforce needs adopted by the Alabama Committee on
73 Credentialing and Career Pathways.

74 (9) ELIGIBLE STUDENT. An individual who completed the
75 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), who is in
76 pursuit of his or her first associate or baccalaureate degree,
77 who satisfies the criteria set out in this act, and who is
78 found to be eligible by rules adopted by the commission.

79 (10) GRANT. A financial award by the State of Alabama
80 to defray the cost of tuition and mandatory fees to an
81 eligible adult learner who is currently enrolled in an
82 authorized institution.

83 (11) PROGRAM. The ReEngage Alabama Grant Program
84 created by this act.



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85 (12) YEAR. An academic year that shall be divided into
86 Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer terms. The term does not mean
87 calendar or fiscal year.

88 Section 3. (a) The program shall be administered by the
89 commission, which may adopt any rules necessary for the
90 administration of the program.

91 (b) The commission shall adopt standards for awarding
92 grant payments to an eligible adult learner who satisfies all
93 of the following:

94 (1) Is a citizen or a lawful permanent resident of the
95 United States.

96 (2) Is a resident of Alabama.

97 (3) Has not attended a postsecondary education
98 institution for at least two years prior to their current
99 enrollment.

100 Section 4. (a) To be eligible for the grant award, an
101 applicant shall satisfy all of the following:

102 (1) Be classified as an undergraduate student with the
103 completion of at least 36 credit hours for an associate degree
104 or at least 72 credit hours for a baccalaureate degree of a
105 college degree program that is connected with workforce
106 development needs and aligned with Alabama's high demand
107 occupations list adopted by the Alabama Committee on
108 Credentialing and Career Pathways.

109 (2) Show proof of residency.

110 (3) Have good academic standing as defined by the
111 institution.

112 (4) Has been accepted to or is enrolled as a full-time



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113 or part-time student in an eligible program in an authorized
114 institution leading to an associate or baccalaureate degree
115 and has not attended a postsecondary education institution at
116 least two years prior.

117 (5) Satisfies continuing eligibility each term by
118 enrolling in six hours or more per term continuously as
119 established by the commission.

120 Section 5. (a) The program shall be used to provide
121 grant award payments for eligible adult learners up to the
122 maximum award amount of three thousand dollars (\$3,000) for
123 universities and one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500)
124 for community colleges per academic semester for a full-time
125 student. Proportional awards shall be given for students
126 taking six to 11 hours and students enrolled in less common
127 academic terms, such as quarters, summer terms, and
128 intersessions.

129 (b) Each grant shall be renewable for the number of
130 terms normally required by the institution for the course of
131 study in which the adult learner is enrolled as long as the
132 student is continuously enrolled until the student receives an
133 associate degree or a baccalaureate degree. The commission
134 shall grant a renewal upon verification that the student
135 remains an eligible student.

136 (c) Grant award payments shall be distributed directly
137 to the approved institution on behalf of the student during
138 the applicable year.

139 (d) The requirements of this act are contingent upon
140 available funding for the program.



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141 (e) The commission shall determine the necessary
142 procedures for awarding grant award payments if the number of
143 eligible applicants and recipients exceeds available funding.

144 (f) Any funds appropriated to the program shall be
145 nonreverting.

146 (g) A percentage of the grant program's appropriations
147 may be expended for the operation and maintenance of the
148 program.

149 (h) Each authorized institution that enrolls an adult
150 learner who is eligible for the tuition and mandatory fees
151 benefits provided by this program shall take necessary action
152 to ensure that the student is aware of all other benefits that
153 he or she may be entitled to under any other federal and state
154 educational benefits, and any student grant or scholarship. In
155 order to receive the benefits provided by this program, the
156 student shall take the necessary steps to utilize all of the
157 above benefits.

158 Section 6. This act shall become effective on the first
159 day of the third month following its passage and approval by
160 the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.