

Subject Higher education: state grant awards

Authors Lee and others

Analyst Nathan Hopkins

Date March 18, 2019

Overview

This bill amends the state grant program statute to increase award amounts for certain non-citizen students or students who do not have a high school diploma in order to compensate or “fill in” for the amount of an unawarded federal Pell Grant. The Office of Higher Education estimates that this change would increase state grant awards for approximately 500 students.

The state grant program is designed to supplement the federal Pell Grant program. Therefore, under current law, a student’s state grant award is reduced by “the amount of a federal Pell grant for which the grant applicant is eligible.” However, in order to receive a Pell grant under federal law, a student must be:

“a citizen or national of the United States, a permanent resident of the United States, or able to provide evidence from the Immigration and Naturalization Service that he or she is in the United States for other than a temporary purpose with the intention of becoming a citizen or permanent resident” (20 U.S.C. § 1091(a)(5)).

In addition, a student will not receive a Pell Grant unless the student has a high school diploma or equivalent, or is enrolled in certain eligible career pathway programs (*see* 20 U.S.C. § 1091(d)). This requirement can disqualify certain students who are enrolled in certain career training programs.

Currently, students who do not meet these two requirements have their state grant reduced by the amount of Pell Grant for which they are eligible, even though they cannot actually receive that Pell Grant award. This bill would increase state grant awards to those students to compensate for their unawarded Pell Grants.