

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 10(FIN)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Offered: 4/28/21

Referred: Rules

Sponsor(s): SENATOR BEGICH

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 **"An Act establishing a grant program to provide to essential workers the tuition and**
2 **fees to attend a state-supported postsecondary educational institution."**

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 * **Section 1.** The uncoded law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section
5 to read:

6 **ESSENTIAL WORKER GRANT PROGRAM.** (a) Subject to appropriation, the
7 Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education shall award a grant in an amount equal to
8 the recipient's cost of annual tuition and fees at a state-supported postsecondary educational
9 institution to a person who

10 (1) applies not later than December 31, 2021, on a form provided by the
11 commission;

12 (2) was

13 (A) employed as an essential worker in the state when the
14 federal government declared a public health emergency on January 31, 2020;

1 or

2 (B) temporarily or permanently laid off in the state as a direct
3 consequence of the public health emergency declared by the federal
4 government on January 31, 2020;

5 (3) is enrolled or about to be enrolled at a state-supported postsecondary
6 educational institution as a half-time or full-time student;

7 (4) has been a resident of the state for at least 12 months;

8 (5) has received, or will receive within six months after applying for a grant
9 under this section, a high school diploma or general educational development certificate;

10 (6) has earned a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or higher in high
11 school or has otherwise demonstrated an equivalent academic ability, as specified by the
12 commission in regulation;

13 (7) has completed and submitted the Free Application for Federal Student Aid
14 for each academic year, if eligible, and accepted all state and federal aid grants available to
15 the person; and

16 (8) has not completed more than a total of 90 credit hours, or the equivalent, at
17 a postsecondary educational institution.

18 (b) A recipient of a grant under this section is eligible to receive a grant for another
19 term if the person

20 (1) maintains a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or higher during each
21 term for which the person has received a grant under this section, unless waived in accordance
22 with regulations adopted by the commission;

23 (2) makes satisfactory progress toward a curriculum, degree, or program, as
24 specified by the commission in regulation;

25 (3) maintains enrollment as a half-time or full-time student; and

26 (4) has not completed the curriculum, degree, or program at a postsecondary
27 educational institution for which the recipient received a grant for the previous term.

28 (c) The commission shall

29 (1) establish an application process for participation in the program;

30 (2) implement policies that improve the academic success or completion rates
31 of students who receive a grant under this section;

(3) evaluate the effects of the grant program for the purpose of preparing the report required under sec. 2 of this Act.

(d) The total amount of grants awarded under this section may not exceed \$2,500,000 in a fiscal year. If the amount appropriated in a fiscal year is insufficient to meet the amounts awarded under (a) and (b) of this section, the commission shall prioritize payment of grants based on need according to the expected family contribution reported on each applicant's Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

(e) The commission shall consult with the Department of Health and Social Services, review the Alaska Essential Services and Critical Workforce Infrastructure Order, as amended on April 10, 2020, and determine the specific employment that qualifies as essential under (a)(2)(A) of this section.

(f) The commission may adopt regulations necessary to implement this section.

(g) In this section,

(1) "commission" means the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education;

(2) "full-time student" means an undergraduate or career education student who enrolls in and regularly attends classes for at least 12 semester hours of credit or the equivalent during the semester; any combination of semester hours of credit, or the equivalent, aggregating to the requisite number of semester hours and undertaken during a semester at two or more public institutions of higher education constitutes full-time student status;

(3) "half-time student" means

(A) an undergraduate or career education student who, during the semester, enrolls in and regularly attends classes at one or more public institutions of higher education for six to 11 semester credit hours or an equivalent of six to 11 semester credit hours; or

(B) a career education student who enrolls in and regularly attends classes for 15 hours a week.

* **Sec. 2.** The uncoded law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to read:

ESSENTIAL WORKER GRANT PROGRAM REPORT. On or before December 31 of each calendar year, the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education shall submit a

1 report to the senate secretary and chief clerk of the house of representatives and notify the
2 legislature that the report is available. The report must include

3 (1) student completion rates of the curricula, degrees, and programs described
4 in sec. 1(b)(2) of this Act;

5 (2) the amount of federal aid awarded to grant recipients under sec. 1 of this
6 Act;

7 (3) the effects of the grant program on the enrollment and finances of state-
8 supported postsecondary educational institutions;

9 (4) the overall success rate and financial effects of the grant program.

10 * **Sec. 3.** Section 1 of this Act is repealed June 30, 2025.

11 * **Sec. 4.** Section 2 of this Act is repealed June 30, 2026.