



General Assembly

January Session, 2025

Raised Bill No. 6885

LCO No. 3896



Referred to Committee on HIGHER EDUCATION AND
EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT

Introduced by:
(HED)

***AN ACT EXPANDING THE DEBT-FREE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
PROGRAM.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General
Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 10a-174 of the general statutes is repealed and the
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

3 (a) As used in this section:

4 (1) "Award" means the greater of: (A) The unpaid portion, if any, of a
5 qualifying student's eligible institutional costs after subtracting [his or
6 her] such student's financial aid, or (B) a minimum award of five
7 hundred dollars for a full-time student or three hundred dollars for a
8 part-time student;

9 (2) "Eligible institutional costs" means the tuition and required fees
10 incurred each semester by an individual student that are established by
11 the Board of Regents for Higher Education for the regional community-
12 technical colleges and the Connecticut State University System;

13 (3) "Financial aid" means the sum of all scholarships, grants and
14 federal, state and institutional aid received by a qualifying student.
15 "Financial aid" does not include any federal, state or private student
16 loans received by a qualifying student;

17 (4) "Qualifying student" means any person who (A) graduated from
18 a public or nonpublic high school, (B) enrolls as a full-time or part-time
19 student for [the fall semester of 2020, or any] a semester [thereafter,] at
20 a regional community-technical college or, for the fall semester of 2025,
21 or any semester thereafter, at a state university within the Connecticut
22 State University System, in a program leading to a degree or certificate,
23 (C) is classified as an in-state student pursuant to section 10a-29, (D) is
24 making satisfactory academic progress while enrolled at a regional
25 community-technical college or state university, (E) has completed the
26 Free Application for Federal Student Aid, and (F) has accepted all
27 available financial aid or is a transition program student;

28 (5) "Full-time student" means a student who is enrolled at a regional
29 community-technical college or a state university within the
30 Connecticut State University System and (A) is carrying twelve or more
31 credit hours in a semester, or (B) has a learning disability documented
32 with the regional community-technical college or state university in
33 which [he or she] such student is enrolled and is enrolled in the
34 maximum number of credit hours that is feasible for such student to
35 attempt in a semester, as determined by such student's academic
36 advisor;

37 (6) "Semester" means the fall or spring semester of an academic year.
38 "Semester" does not include a summer semester or session;

39 (7) "Part-time student" means a student who is enrolled at a regional
40 community-technical college or a state university within the
41 Connecticut State University System and is carrying not less than six but
42 fewer than twelve credit hours in a semester; and

43 (8) "Transition program student" means any person who (A) is a

44 resident of this state, (B) has not graduated from high school, (C) is
45 enrolled in a transition program pursuant to such person's
46 individualized education program, and (D) enrolls in one or more
47 courses at a regional community-technical college or a state university
48 within the Connecticut State University System.

49 (b) The Board of Regents for Higher Education shall (1) establish a
50 debt-free [community] college program to make awards to qualifying
51 students each semester, (2) adopt rules, procedures and forms necessary
52 to implement the debt-free [community] college program, and (3)
53 submit a report outlining such rules, procedures and forms, in
54 accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, to the joint standing
55 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters
56 relating to higher education. Awards made to qualifying students
57 pursuant to the debt-free [community] college program shall be
58 designated as the "Mary Ann Handley Award".

59 (c) For the fall semester of 2020, and each semester thereafter, the
60 Board of Regents for Higher Education shall make awards to qualifying
61 students within available appropriations. An award shall be available
62 to a qualifying student for the first seventy-two credit hours earned by
63 the qualifying student at a regional community-technical college or a
64 state university within the Connecticut State University System,
65 provided the qualifying student meets and continues to meet the
66 requirements of this section. The board shall not use an award to
67 supplant any financial aid, including, but not limited to, state or
68 institutional aid, otherwise available to a qualifying student.

69 (d) Not later than November 1, 2024, and March 1, 2025, and each
70 semester thereafter, the Board of Regents for Higher Education shall
71 report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, to the joint
72 standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of
73 matters relating to higher education and employment advancement and
74 appropriations and the budgets of the state agencies regarding the debt-
75 free [community] college program, including, but not limited to, (1) the

76 number of qualifying students enrolled at the regional community-
 77 technical colleges and state universities within the Connecticut State
 78 University System during each semester, (2) the number of qualifying
 79 students receiving minimum awards and the number of qualifying
 80 students receiving awards for the unpaid portion of eligible institutional
 81 costs, (3) the average number of credit hours the qualifying students
 82 enrolled in each semester and the average number of credit hours the
 83 qualifying students completed each semester, (4) the average amount of
 84 the award made to qualifying students under this section for the unpaid
 85 portion of eligible institutional costs, and (5) the completion rates of
 86 qualifying students receiving awards under this section by an
 87 institution of higher education and degree or certificate program.

88 Sec. 2. Subsection (f) of section 4-89 of the general statutes is repealed
 89 and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

90 (f) The provisions of this section shall not apply to appropriations to
 91 (1) the Office of Higher Education for (A) student financial assistance
 92 for the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship program established under section
 93 10a-173, or (B) the minority advancement program established under
 94 subsection (b) of section 10a-11, (2) the Board of Regents for Higher
 95 Education for (A) Connecticut higher education centers of excellence
 96 established under section 10a-25h, or (B) the debt-free [community]
 97 college program established pursuant to section 10a-174, as amended by
 98 this act, (3) the operating funds of the constituent units of the state
 99 system of higher education established pursuant to sections 10a-105,
 100 10a-99 and 10a-77, or (4) the Connecticut Open Educational Resource
 101 Coordinating Council established under section 10a-44d. Such
 102 appropriations shall not lapse until the end of the fiscal year succeeding
 103 the fiscal year of the appropriation except that (A) centers of excellence
 104 appropriations deposited by the Board of Regents for Higher Education
 105 in the Endowed Chair Investment Fund, established under section 10a-
 106 20a, shall not lapse but shall be held permanently in the Endowed Chair
 107 Investment Fund, (B) any moneys remaining in higher education
 108 operating funds of the constituent units of the state system of higher

109 education shall not lapse but shall be held permanently in such funds,
110 and (C) any appropriations to the Office of Higher Education for the
111 Roberta B. Willis Scholarship program shall not lapse but shall be held
112 permanently for such program. On or before September first, annually,
113 the Office of Higher Education and Board of Regents for Higher
114 Education shall submit a report to the joint standing committee of the
115 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to
116 appropriations and the budgets of state agencies, through the Office of
117 Fiscal Analysis, concerning the amount of each such appropriation
118 carried over from the preceding fiscal year.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	10a-174
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	4-89(f)

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Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	4-89(f)

Statement of Purpose:

To expand the debt-free community college program to include students enrolled in a state university within the Connecticut State University System.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]