

## House Bill No. 75

An act relating to the John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program; amending s. 1002.39, F.S.; revising definition of the term “students with disabilities”; revising student eligibility requirements for receipt of a scholarship; revising provisions relating to scholarship funding and payment; providing funding and payment requirements for former Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind students and for students exiting a Department of Juvenile Justice program; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Subsections (1), (2), and (6) of section 1002.39, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

1002.39 The John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program.—There is established a program that is separate and distinct from the Opportunity Scholarship Program and is named the John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program, pursuant to this section.

(1) THE JOHN M. MCKAY SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES PROGRAM.—The John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program is established to provide the option to attend a public school other than the one to which assigned, or to provide a scholarship to a private school of choice, for students with disabilities for whom an individual education plan has been written in accordance with rules of the State Board of Education. Students with disabilities include K-12 students who are documented as having mental retardation; a mentally handicapped, speech or and language impairment; a impaired, deaf or hard-of hearing impairment, including deafness; a visual impairment, including blindness; a visually impaired, dual sensory impairment; a physical impairment; a serious emotional disturbance, including an emotional handicap; a impaired, physically impaired, emotionally handicapped, specific learning disability, including, but not limited to, dyslexia, dyscalculia, or developmental aphasia; a traumatic brain injury; disabled, hospitalized or homebound, or autism autistic.

(2) SCHOLARSHIP ELIGIBILITY.—The parent of a public school student with a disability who is dissatisfied with the student’s progress may request and receive from the state a John M. McKay Scholarship for the child to enroll in and attend a private school in accordance with this section if:

(a) ~~By assigned school attendance area or by special assignment,~~ The student has spent the prior school year in attendance at a Florida public school or the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind. Prior school year in attendance means that the student was:

1. Enrolled and reported by a school district for funding during the preceding October and February Florida Education Finance Program surveys in kindergarten through grade 12, which shall include time spent in a Department of Juvenile Justice commitment program if funded under the Florida Education Finance Program; or

2. Enrolled and reported by the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind during the preceding October and February student membership surveys in kindergarten through grade 12.

~~However, this paragraph does not apply to a dependent child of a member of the United States Armed Forces who transfers to a school in this state from out of state or from a foreign country pursuant to a parent's permanent change of station orders is exempt from this paragraph but. A dependent child of a member of the United States Armed Forces who transfers to a school in this state from out of state or from a foreign country pursuant to a parent's permanent change of station orders must meet all other eligibility requirements to participate in the program.~~

(b) The parent has obtained acceptance for admission of the student to a private school that is eligible for the program under subsection (4) and has notified the school district of the request for a scholarship at least 60 days prior to the date of the first scholarship payment. The parental notification must be through a communication directly to the district or through the Department of Education to the district in a manner that creates a written or electronic record of the notification and the date of receipt of the notification.

~~This section does not apply to~~ A student who is enrolled in a school operating for the purpose of providing educational services to youth in Department of Juvenile Justice commitment programs shall not receive a John M. McKay Scholarship during the period of time that he or she is enrolled in such school. For purposes of continuity of educational choice, the scholarship shall remain in force until the student returns to a public school or graduates from high school. However, at any time, the student's parent may remove the student from the private school and place the student in another private school that is eligible for the program under subsection (4) or in a public school as provided in subsection (3).

## (6) SCHOLARSHIP FUNDING AND PAYMENT.—

(a)1. The maximum scholarship granted for an eligible student with disabilities shall be a calculated amount equivalent to the base student allocation in the Florida Education Finance Program multiplied by the appropriate cost factor for the educational program that would have been provided for the student in the district school to which he or she was assigned, multiplied by the district cost differential.

2. In addition, a share of the guaranteed allocation for exceptional students shall be determined and added to the calculated amount. The calculation shall be based on the methodology and the data used to calculate the guaranteed allocation for exceptional students for each district in chapter

2000-166, Laws of Florida. Except as provided in subparagraphs subparagraph 3. and 4., the calculation shall be based on the student's grade, matrix level of services, and the difference between the 2000-2001 basic program and the appropriate level of services cost factor, multiplied by the 2000-2001 base student allocation and the 2000-2001 district cost differential for the sending district. Also, the calculated amount shall include the per-student share of supplemental academic instruction funds, instructional materials funds, technology funds, and other categorical funds as provided for such purposes in the General Appropriations Act.

3. The calculated scholarship amount for a student who has spent the prior school year in attendance at the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind shall be calculated as provided in subparagraphs 1. and 2. However, the calculation shall be based on the school district in which the parent resides at the time of the scholarship request.

~~4.3.~~ Until the school district completes the matrix required by paragraph (3)(b), the calculation shall be based on the matrix that assigns the student to support level I of service as it existed prior to the 2000-2001 school year. When the school district completes the matrix, the amount of the payment shall be adjusted as needed.

(b) The amount of the John M. McKay Scholarship shall be the calculated amount or the amount of the private school's tuition and fees, whichever is less. The amount of any assessment fee required by the participating private school may be paid from the total amount of the scholarship.

~~(c) If the participating private school requires partial payment of tuition prior to the start of the academic year to reserve space for students admitted to the school, that partial payment may be paid by the Department of Education prior to the first quarterly payment of the year in which the John M. McKay Scholarship is awarded, up to a maximum of \$1,000, and deducted from subsequent scholarship payments. If a student decides not to attend the participating private school, the partial reservation payment must be returned to the Department of Education by the participating private school. There is a limit of one reservation payment per student per year.~~

~~(c)(d)1.~~ The school district shall report all students who are attending a private school under this program. The students with disabilities attending private schools on John M. McKay Scholarships shall be reported separately from other students reported for purposes of the Florida Education Finance Program.

2. For program participants who are eligible under subparagraph (2)(a)2., the school district that is used as the basis for the calculation of the scholarship amount as provided in subparagraph (a)3. shall:

a. Report to the department all such students who are attending a private school under this program.

b. Be held harmless for such students from the weighted enrollment ceiling for group 2 programs in s. 1011.62(1)(d)3.a. during the first school year in which the students are reported.

(d)(e) Following notification on July 1, September 1, December 1, or February 1 of the number of program participants, the department of Education shall transfer, from General Revenue funds only, the amount calculated under paragraph (b) from the school district's total funding entitlement under the Florida Education Finance Program and from authorized categorical accounts to a separate account for the scholarship program for quarterly disbursement to the parents of participating students.

Funds may not be transferred from any funding provided to the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind for program participants who are eligible under subparagraph (2)(a)2. For a student exiting a Department of Juvenile Justice commitment program who chooses to participate in the scholarship program, the amount of the John M. McKay Scholarship calculated pursuant to paragraph (b) shall be transferred from the school district in which the student last attended a public school prior to commitment to the Department of Juvenile Justice. When a student enters the scholarship program, the department of Education must receive all documentation required for the student's participation, including the private school's and student's fee schedules, at least 30 days before the first quarterly scholarship payment is made for the student. The Department of Education may not make any retroactive payments.

(e)(f) Upon proper documentation reviewed and approved by the Department of Education, the Chief Financial Officer shall make scholarship payments in four equal amounts no later than September 1, November 1, February 1, and April 15 of each academic year in which the scholarship is in force. The initial payment shall be made after Department of Education verification of admission acceptance, and subsequent payments shall be made upon verification of continued enrollment and attendance at the private school. Payment must be by individual warrant made payable to the student's parent and mailed by the Department of Education to the private school of the parent's choice, and the parent shall restrictively endorse the warrant to the private school for deposit into the account of the private school.

Section 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.

Approved by the Governor June 9, 2006.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 9, 2006.