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SB 19-174

FINAL FISCAL NOTE

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| Drafting Number: | LLS 19-0872 | Date: | July 29, 2019 |
| Prime Sponsors: | Sen. Garcia; Hill Rep. Buentello; Neville | Bill Status: | Signed into Law |
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Bill Topic: DEPENDENT TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

Summary of Fiscal Impact: **No fiscal impact.** This bill clarifies aspects of the dependent tuition assistance program in the Department of Higher Education. The bill does not change state or local government revenue or expenditures.

Appropriation Summary: No appropriation is required.

Fiscal Note Status: This fiscal note reflects the enacted bill.

Summary of Legislation

Under current law, the dependent tuition assistance program (DTAP) provides state tuition assistance to eligible dependents of a prisoner of war, military personnel missing in action, or Colorado National Guardsman, law enforcement officer, or firefighter who died or was permanently disabled while on duty. To participate in the program, dependents must not be eligible for federal educational benefits.

The bill repeals the provision prohibiting dependents from receiving both a DTAP award and federal educational benefits. The bill also allows eligible dependents to receive a DTAP award prior to receiving federal educational benefits through the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Act, and specifies that the DTAP award must be reduced by the amount of any federal educational benefits received.

Background

DTAP. The DTAP program is administered by the Department of Higher Education (DHE). Awards cover the cost of tuition and standard room and board, for up to 12 academic quarters or 8 semesters. Students must enroll before the age of 22, maintain a minimum cumulative 2.5 GPA, and must complete their degree or certificate within six years. The specific amount of the award varies based on the institution the recipient attends.

In FY 2017-18, 53 students participated in the program, of whom 13 were also Pell grant recipients, and award distributions totaled \$545,420. The average award was \$6,140 per semester for all recipients, and \$2,473 per semester for Pell grant recipients. In the current FY 2018-19, 66 students are participating, and \$672,000 was appropriated from the General Fund for the program.

Federal educational benefits. The federal Public Safety Officers' Benefits program provides educational assistance to the spouses and children of local police, fire, and emergency public safety officers who have been killed or disabled in the line of duty. A participant may receive \$1,224 per month, for up to 45 months of full-time education. The award may be used to cover educational expenses, including tuition, room and board, books, supplies, or related fees.

Assessment of No Fiscal Impact

The bill codifies existing practice into law and does not impact the revenue, expenditures, or workload of any state agency, local government, or institution of higher education for the following reasons.

- Current law prohibits students from receiving educational assistance from the federal Public Safety Officers' Benefit program; however, due to the federal program's wait times, eligibility criteria, and competitiveness, it is unlikely that many DTAP students will receive federal assistance. Of the 66 current DTAP participants, four would be eligible for the federal program in FY 2018-19.
- Participating students are currently required to complete a federal financial aid application (FAFSA) prior to applying to the DTAP program, and any Pell grants awarded are deducted from the total DTAP award amount.
- Participating students that receive additional assistance typically receive private scholarships, rather than other federal assistance. Any private scholarships are used to cover educational expenses not covered by DTAP, such as fees and books.

For these reasons, the bill is not expected to change the amount of awards or the number of students served, and is assessed as having no fiscal impact.

Effective Date

The bill was signed into law by the Governor on May 14, 2019, and takes effect August 2, 2019, assuming no referendum petition is filed.

State and Local Government Contacts

Fire Chiefs

Higher Education

Military Affairs

Sheriffs