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SYNOPSIS
Requires high school students to complete financial aid applications.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As reported by the Senate Education Committee on November 27, 2023, with amendments.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 12/21/2023)
AN ACT concerning 3\{graduation requirements for\}² high school students ¹\{and supplementing chapter 7C of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes\}¹ ³\{and financial aid applications\}².

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. a. Beginning with the ³\{2022-2023\} 2023-2024³ grade 11 class, ¹\{and for two school years thereafter\}.¹ ³\{the State Board of Education shall require that the local graduation requirements adopted by\}² a board of education or a board of trustees of a charter school ¹\{include the requirement that\} shall require² a student¹, and the student’s parent or guardian, if applicable,¹ ³\{to\} complete and submit a financial aid application in a form prescribed by the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority ¹\{as a prerequisite to the student receiving a high school diploma from a public high school or charter school unless a waiver is submitted to the school district or charter school as set forth in subsection b. of this section¹\}.

b. ³\{1\}³ A student shall be exempt from the ¹\{graduation\}¹ requirement ³\{in subsection a. of this section\}³ if the student ¹\{or the student’s parent or guardian\} submits to the school district ¹\{or charter school\}¹ ³\{:

(1)³ a \{waiver\}¹ form signed by the parent or guardian, or by the student if ¹\{the\} the student¹ is at least 18 years of age, requesting the exemption from ³\{the\} the requirement¹ ³\{; or\}.

(2) ¹\{a form signed by the school counselor authorizing the exemption for good cause as defined by the State board\} ³\{if\} ³\{; or\}.

(3) ¹\{the\} the student is under 18 years of age and a form signed by the parent or guardian cannot be reasonably obtained, the student’s school counselor may authorize the waiver as permitted by regulations promulgated by the ²\{Commissioner of Education\}¹ State Board of Education pursuant to subsection h. of this section².

c. The ¹\{Commissioner of Education\} Executive Director of the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority¹, in consultation with the ¹\{Executive Director of the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority\} Commissioner of Education¹, shall provide ²\{a list of\}² resources for school districts, ³\{charter schools\}³ parents, and students that include instructions on how to complete a financial aid application prescribed by the authority. ²\{The resources shall include webinars, presentations, guidance documents, and a list of available State and federal resources\}.² The executive director of the authority shall make available such resources.

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [this] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:
³Assembly AHI committee amendments adopted March 14, 2022.
³Assembly AED committee amendments adopted June 8, 2023.
³Senate SED committee amendments adopted November 27, 2023.
resources as are necessary directly to school counselors or other school employees [who assist students in completing the financial aid application] who shall share the [information] resources with students and with the students’ parents or guardians1.

(1) Each school district [and charter school] shall annually notify students and the parents or guardians of the requirement established pursuant to this section.

(2) The Department of Education shall verify which students have met the requirement established pursuant to this section with the authority. The department shall include that information in the student’s record.

(3) The Department of Education shall include the number of students who have met the requirement established pursuant to this section in the School Report Card issued pursuant to P.L.1995, c.235 (C.18A:7E-1 et seq.).

(4) No adverse action shall be taken by a board of education or a board of trustees of a charter school against any student [who is exempted] due to a student's receipt of an exemption from the requirement to complete and submit a financial aid application pursuant to subsection b. of this section.

(5) Nothing in this act shall be construed as requiring school counselors, or any other school employee, to assist students in completing the financial aid application. Nothing in this act shall be construed as creating a private right of action against the school district [or charter school] or the State upon compliance or noncompliance with the provisions of this act.1

(6) The Executive Director of the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority shall make the resources listed in subsection c. of this section available to institutions of higher education in order to facilitate the delivery of technical assistance to area high schools.

(7) The State Board of Education shall adopt, pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), rules and regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of this act.2

(8) The executive director of the authority shall prepare and issue to the Department of Education, and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), a report that includes the number of students that completed a financial aid form pursuant to subsection a. of this section, as well as the number of waivers submitted to school districts or charter schools pursuant to subsection b. of this section no later than three years following the effective date of this act.3

2. This act shall take effect immediately.