

CHAPTER 269

AN ACT concerning programs to support aviation education, supplementing Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes, and making an appropriation.

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

C.18A:71C-93 Definitions.

1. As used in sections 1 through 3 of P.L.2025, c.269 (C.18A:71C-93 through 18A:71C-95):

“Approved site” means an airport located within the State or operated by a multi-state agency serving the State or a Terminal Radar Approach Control, Air Route Control Center, or any other similar Federal Aviation Administration facility serving an airport located within the State or operated by a multi-state agency serving the State.

“Authority” means the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority.

“Eligible air traffic controller” means an air traffic controller holding an appropriate degree who commences employment with the Federal Aviation Administration following the effective date of P.L.2025, c.269 (C.18A:71C-93 et al.).

“Executive director” means the executive director of the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority.

“Program” means the Air Traffic Controller Loan Redemption Program established pursuant to section 3 P.L.2025, c.269 (C.18A:71C-95).

“Program participant” means an eligible air traffic controller who contracts with the authority to be an air traffic controller at an approved site in exchange for the redemption of qualifying student loan amounts.

“Qualifying student loan amounts” means the cumulative outstanding balance of federal, State, or commercial student loans at the time an applicant is selected for the program, which an applicant has borrowed to pay for the cost of attendance for undergraduate or graduate education at an institution of higher education. Interest paid or due on qualifying student loan amounts shall be considered eligible for redemption under the program.

“Total and permanent disability” means a physical or mental disability that is expected to continue indefinitely or result in death and renders a program participant unable to perform the program participant’s contractual obligation, as determined by the executive director or the executive director’s designee.

C.18A:71C-94 Air Traffic Controller Loan Redemption Program.

2. a. There is established the Air Traffic Controller Loan Redemption Program within the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority. The program shall provide for the redemption of a portion of the qualifying student loan amounts of a program participant for each period of service at an approved site.

b. To be eligible to participate in the program, an applicant shall:

(1) be a resident of the State; and

(2) be employed as an eligible air traffic controller at an approved site.

c. The executive director, or the executive director’s designee, shall select the program participants from among those applicants who meet the eligibility criteria, subject to available funds.

d. The program participant shall enter into a written contract with the authority to participate in the program. The contract shall specify the duration of the program participant’s required service and the total amount of qualifying student loan amounts to be redeemed by the State in return for service.

e. The redemption of qualifying student loan amounts under the program shall amount to 16 percent of the program participant's qualifying student loan amounts in return for one full year of service at an approved site, up to \$16,000, an additional 26 percent for a second full year of service, up to \$26,000, an additional 28 percent for a third full year of service, up to \$28,000, and an additional 30 percent for a fourth full year of service, up to \$30,000. Total redemption of qualifying student loan amounts under the program shall not exceed \$100,000.

f. The period of service shall commence on or after the date of enactment of P.L.2025, c.269 (C.18A:71C-93 et al.).

g. No amount of qualifying student loan amounts shall be redeemed for services performed for less than a full year.

C.18A:71C-95 Air Traffic Controller Loan Redemption contract nullification.

3. a. A program participant who has entered into a redemption contract with the authority pursuant to section 2 of P.L.2025, c.269 (C.18A:71C-94) may nullify that contract by submitting written notification to the authority and assuming full responsibility for repayment of the full amount of the program participant's student loan amounts.

b. In the case of a program participant's death or total and permanent disability, the authority shall nullify the service obligation of the program participant.

c. The authority may nullify or suspend a program participant's service obligation if continued enforcement of the contract may result in extreme hardship.

C.18A:3B-42.1 Aviation grant program, higher education, Unmanned Aircraft Systems Collegiate Training Initiative participants .

4. a. The Secretary of Higher Education shall, in consultation with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development and any other State agencies as deemed appropriate by the secretary, establish a program to provide aviation grants to public institutions of higher education which participate in the federal Unmanned Aircraft Systems Collegiate Training Initiative established pursuant to section 631 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018. The purposes of the program shall be to award grants to public institutions of higher education to:

(1) support an institution of higher education's participation in the federal Unmanned Aircraft Systems Collegiate Training Initiative established pursuant to section 631 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018;

(2) support the establishment of a Center for the Study of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena;

(3) facilitate the establishment of non-engineering aviation degrees which teach basic courses in air traffic control and aviation administration; and

(4) encourage an institution of higher education to join the Federal Aviation Administration's Air Traffic-Collegiate Training Initiatives Program.

b. The secretary shall determine the allowable uses for grant funds prior to accepting applications to participate in the program and shall describe the allowable uses in a notice of grant opportunity.

c. A public institution of higher education seeking to participate in the program shall submit an application to the secretary in a form and manner prescribed by the secretary. The application shall include:

(1) confirmation of the institution's active participation in, or planned participation in, the federal Unmanned Aircraft Systems Collegiate Training Initiative;

(2) the institution's capacity to support a Center for the Study of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena;

(3) whether the institution offers non-engineering aviation degrees that include instruction in air traffic control and aviation administration, or has any plans to establish these degree programs;

(4) whether the institution participates in, or plans to participate in, the federal Aviation Administration's Air Traffic-Collegiate Training Initiatives Program; and

(5) any other information the secretary deems necessary.

d. The secretary shall make the application available no later than 120 days following the effective date of P.L.2025, c.269 (C.18A:71C-93 et al.).

e. After reviewing the applications submitted pursuant to subsection c. of this section, the secretary shall select one or more public institutions of higher education to participate in the program. The secretary shall give preference to an institution of higher education located in a county of the first class. The secretary shall award on an annual basis a total of \$2,500,000 in grants to public institutions of higher education pursuant to this section.

f. In addition to the funds appropriated to the program pursuant to P.L.2025, c.269 (C.18A:71C-93 et al.), the secretary may accept and allocate funds made available to the program by contribution, gift, donation, or any other sources for the purpose of the program.

5. a. The Higher Education Student Assistance Authority shall adopt rules and regulations pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), as may be necessary to implement the provisions of sections 1 through 3 of P.L.2025, c.269 (C.18A:71C-93 through 18A:71C-95).

b. The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education shall adopt rules and regulations pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), as may be necessary to implement the provisions of section 4 of P.L.2025, c.269 (C.18A:3B-42.1).

6. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority the sum of \$1,000,000 to fund the Air Traffic Controller Loan Redemption Program established pursuant to section 2 of this act, of which sum no more than five percent may be dedicated to the administrative costs of the program. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education the sum of \$2,500,000 to fund the program established pursuant to section 4 of this act.

7. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved January 12, 2026.