ASSEMBLY, No. 5382

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

222nd LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED SEPTEMBER 10, 2026

Sponsored by:
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District 34 (Essex)
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SYNOPSIS

Establishes New Jersey Student Emergency Aid Program in Higher Education Student Assistance Authority.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 10/15/2026)

AN ACT concerning emergency student financial assistance and supplementing chapter 71B of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

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

1. a. There is established in the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority the "New Jersey Student Emergency Aid Program." The purpose of the program shall be to provide emergency aid grants to undergraduate students enrolled in public institutions of higher education who are experiencing unexpected financial crises and require financial assistance for living expenses including, but not limited to, groceries, clothing, housing, transportation, medical expenses, technology, and childcare. The Higher Education Student Assistance Authority shall distribute funds, within the limit of available appropriations and any other funds that may be available for the purposes of the program, to each public institution of higher education pursuant to a methodology to be established by the authority. Each public institution of higher education shall administer the program and distribute emergency aid grants to eligible students enrolled in the institution.

b. The Higher Education Student Assistance Authority, in consultation with the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, public institutions of higher education, and the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, shall establish guidelines for the program that shall include, but not be limited to:

(1) eligibility criteria for student applicants;

(2) permissible uses of emergency aid grants;

(3) application and approval procedures for use by public institutions of higher education to ensure the timely distribution of grants;

(4) the maximum emergency aid grant per student for each public institution of higher education;

(5) an annual or lifetime limit for emergency aid grants on a per student basis; and

(6) reporting and recordkeeping requirements for public institutions of higher education distributing grants under the program.

c. Each public institution of higher education shall adopt policies and procedures consistent with the guidelines issued by the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority.

d. The financial aid office of each public institution of higher education shall manage student applications for grants under the program, distribute grants under the program, and advertise the availability of emergency aid grants.

e. Emergency aid grants distributed under the program shall not be considered financial aid or taxable income for the purposes of

determining a student's eligibility for State student financial assistance programs, to the extent permitted by law.

f. Emergency aid grants distributed under the program shall not be used to pay outstanding tuition or fees or for the repayment of student loans.

g. The financial aid office of each public institution of higher education shall provide each student receiving an emergency aid grant with information about other relevant campus resources, community resources, and government-administered supports including, but not limited to, food pantries, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and clothing closets.

2. a. Each public institution of higher education that administers emergency aid grants pursuant to this act shall submit an annual report to the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority, in a form and manner prescribed by the authority, that includes:

(1) the number of students who received emergency aid grants during the preceding academic year;

(2) the average and median dollar amounts of emergency aid grants awarded during the preceding academic year;

(3) the types of emergencies for which grants were awarded during the preceding academic year, in aggregate and without identifying individual students; and

(4) the percentage of students who received emergency aid grants and who remained enrolled or completed their academic program during or following the academic year in which the aid was received.

b. The Higher Education Student Assistance Authority shall submit an annual report to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1) that summarizes the information submitted by institutions pursuant to subsection a. of this section.

3. There is established in the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority a nonlapsing, revolving fund to be known as the "New Jersey Student Emergency Aid Program Fund." The fund shall be credited with moneys as may be appropriated by the Legislature and any federal or private funds that may be available for the purposes of the fund. Moneys in the fund shall be used for the purpose of providing emergency aid grants pursuant to section 1 of this act. The Executive Director of the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority shall determine the methodology for distributing monies deposited in the fund to public institutions of higher education.

4. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the "New Jersey Student Emergency Aid Program Fund" the sum of $1,500,000.

5. This act shall take effect immediately and grants awarded under the program shall be available in the first full academic year next following the date of enactment.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes the New Jersey Student Emergency Aid Program in the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (the authority).

The purpose of the program is to provide emergency aid grants to undergraduate students enrolled in public institutions of higher education who are facing unexpected financial crises and require financial assistance for living expenses. Under the bill, the authority is required to distribute funds, within the limit of available funds, to each public institution of higher education. Each public institution of higher education will administer the program and distribute emergency aid grants to eligible students enrolled in the institution.

The authority, in consultation with the Secretary of Higher Education, public institutions of higher education, and the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, is required under the bill to establish guidelines for the program which would include: (1) eligibility criteria for student applicants; (2) permissible uses of emergency aid grants; (3) application and approval procedures for use by public institutions of higher education to ensure the timely distribution of grants; (4) the maximum emergency aid grant per student for each public institution of higher education; (5) an annual or lifetime limit for emergency aid grants on a per student basis; and (6) reporting and recordkeeping requirements for public institutions of higher education distributing grants under the program.

Each public institution of higher education would adopt policies and procedures consistent with the guidelines.

The bill stipulates that the financial aid office of each public institution of higher education will manage student applications for emergency grants, distribute the grants to eligible students, and advertise the availability of the grants.

Emergency aid grants distributed under the program may not be considered financial aid or taxable income for the purposes of determining a student's eligibility for State-funded student financial assistance programs, to the extent permitted by law. Emergency aid grants distributed under the program may also not be used to pay outstanding tuition or fees or in the repayment of student loans.

The bill requires each public institution of higher education distributing grants under the program to submit an annual report to the authority. The authority will subsequently submit a report summarizing this information to the Governor and the Legislature.

Finally, the bill establishes a nonlapsing, revolving fund to be known as the "New Jersey Student Emergency Aid Program Fund."