



2023-2024 General Assembly

SENATE BILL 743: The Disaster Recovery Act of 2024 - Part II, Sec. 4A.6: Emergency Scholarship Grants for Postsecondary Students

Committee:		Date:	December 16, 2024
Introduced by:		Prepared by:	Drupti Chauhan
Analysis of:	Sec. 4A.6 of S.L. 2024-53		Staff Attorney

Section 4A.6 of S.L. 2024-53 establishes the Hurricane Helene Emergency Grant Program for Postsecondary Students (Program) to provide emergency scholarship grants in an amount up to \$2,500 per student to eligible postsecondary students who have suffered financial hardship due to the damage and destruction from Hurricane Helene. These grants can be used to cover any expenses that support a student's continued enrollment, including costs related to transportation, textbooks, tuition, fees, and living expenses. Affected institutions of higher education are any of the following:

- *Brevard College*
- *Gardner-Webb University*
- *Lenoir-Rhyne University*
- *Lees-McRae College*
- *Mars Hill University*
- *Montreat College*
- *Warren Wilson College*
- *Appalachian State University*
- *The University of North Carolina at Asheville*
- *Western Carolina University*
- *Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College*
- *Blue Ridge Community College*
- *Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute*
- *Catawba Valley Community College*
- *Cleveland Community College*
- *Gaston College*
- *Haywood Community College*
- *Isothermal Community College*
- *Mayland Community College*
- *McDowell Technical Community College*
- *Southwestern Community College*
- *Tri-County Community College*
- *Western Piedmont Community College*
- *Wilkes Community College*

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Senate Bill 743

Page 2

By November 15, 2024, institutions of higher education must begin accepting applications from eligible postsecondary students. An application for an emergency scholarship grant must demonstrate that the student is an eligible postsecondary student by including documentation that the student meets all of the following criteria:

- *The student has a financial need related to the impact of Hurricane Helene.*
- *The student meets one of the following criteria at the time of the application:*
 - *Is enrolled in an affected institution of higher education.*
 - *Resides, temporarily or permanently, in the affected area.*

Within the funds available to an institution of higher education, an institution must award an emergency scholarship grant to an eligible postsecondary student within two weeks of the receipt of the application, or as soon as otherwise practicable, in an amount of up to \$2,500 based on the information provided in the student's application. An institution of higher education can establish priority in the award of emergency scholarship grants to eligible postsecondary students based on the funds available and the pool of applicants, including giving priority to students who have demonstrated the greatest financial need. If no priority is established, the emergency scholarship grants must be awarded in the order in which applications are received. If the institution of higher education has unexpended funds remaining after the award of the initial emergency scholarship grants, the institution can increase the award to an eligible postsecondary student who previously received funds or solicit additional applications from eligible postsecondary students, provided that the award to an individual student does not exceed \$2,500 for each academic semester in which funds are awarded.

Funds for UNC Constituent Institutions:

Of the funds appropriated from the Helene Fund to the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina (BOG) for the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the sum of \$5 million in nonrecurring funds must be allocated by the BOG to constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina for the purpose of providing emergency scholarship grants to eligible postsecondary students in accordance with the Program. The BOG must prioritize the allocation of funds based on the impact of Hurricane Helene on enrolled students to the following constituent institutions:

- *Appalachian State University, the University of North Carolina at Asheville, and Western Carolina University.*
- *Other constituent institutions that have an eligible postsecondary student enrolled at the institution who (i) resides, temporarily or permanently, in the affected area or (ii) has transferred to the institution due to the damage and destruction caused by Hurricane Helene.*

Constituent institutions allocated funds under the Program have the discretion to establish criteria for the eligibility of postsecondary students in addition to the criteria required by this section. However, the BOG is prohibited from establishing additional eligibility requirements for the administration of the Program other than those set forth in this section.

Funds for Community Colleges:

Of the funds appropriated from the Helene Fund to the Community Colleges System Office (System Office) for the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the sum of \$10.5 million in nonrecurring funds must be allocated by the State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC) to community colleges for the purpose of providing emergency scholarship grants to eligible postsecondary students in accordance with the Program. The SBCC must prioritize the allocation of funds based on the impacts of Hurricane Helene on enrolled students to the following community colleges:

- *Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College*
- *Blue Ridge Community College*

Senate Bill 743

Page 3

- *Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute*
- *Catawba Valley Community College*
- *Cleveland Community College*
- *Gaston College*
- *Haywood Community College*
- *Isothermal Community College*
- *Mayland Community College*
- *McDowell Technical Community College*
- *Southwestern Community College*
- *Tri-County Community College*
- *Western Piedmont Community College*
- *Wilkes Community College*
- *Other community colleges that have an eligible postsecondary student enrolled at the community college who (i) resides, temporarily or permanently, in the affected area or (ii) has transferred to the community college due to the damage and destruction caused by Hurricane Helene.*

Community colleges allocated funds under the Program have discretion to establish criteria for the eligibility of postsecondary students in addition to the criteria required by this section. However, the SBCC is prohibited from establishing additional eligibility requirements for the administration of the Program to those set forth in this section.

Funds for Private Postsecondary Institutions:

Of the funds appropriated from the Helene Fund to the BOG for the 2024-2025 fiscal year, in addition to the \$5 million allocated to constituent institutions, the sum of \$1 million in nonrecurring funds must be allocated by the BOG to the State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA) to provide funds to eligible private postsecondary institutions for the purpose of providing emergency scholarship grants to eligible postsecondary students in accordance with the Program. SEAA must prioritize the allocation of funds based on the impact of Hurricane Helene on enrolled students to the following eligible private postsecondary institutions:

- *Brevard College*
- *Gardner-Webb University*
- *Lenoir-Rhyne University*
- *Lees-McRae College*
- *Mars Hill University*
- *Montreat College*
- *Warren Wilson College*
- *A campus of a private postsecondary institution that has an eligible postsecondary student enrolled at the private postsecondary institution who (i) resides, temporarily or permanently, in the affected area or (ii) has transferred to the private postsecondary institution due to the damage and destruction caused by Hurricane Helene.*

Private postsecondary institutions allocated funds under the Program must have discretion to establish criteria for the eligibility of postsecondary students in addition to the criteria required by this section. However, SEAA is prohibited from establishing additional eligibility requirements for the administration of the Program to those set forth in this section. A private postsecondary institution receiving funds pursuant to this subsection must report to SEAA on the implementation of the Program, including the number of emergency scholarship grants awarded to students and the amount of those grants, the use of emergency scholarship grant funds by eligible postsecondary students, any funds

Senate Bill 743

Page 4

reimbursed to institutions due to coverage of losses by alternative funds, and any remaining funds available for awards in subsequent semesters.

By March 15, 2025, the BOG, the SBCC, and SEAA must report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division of the General Assembly on the implementation of the Program at the institutions of higher education that received funds, including the number and type of institutions of higher education that were allocated funds, the amount of funds allocated to each institution, the number of emergency scholarship grants awarded to students and the amount of those grants, the use of emergency scholarship grant funds by eligible postsecondary students, any funds reimbursed to institutions due to coverage of losses by alternative funds, and any remaining funds available for awards in subsequent semesters.

This section became effective October 25, 2024.