



2025-2026 General Assembly

SENATE BILL 257: 2026 Appropriations Act, Sec. 8A.5: Clarify Opportunity Scholarship Residency Requirements

Analysis of: S.L. 2026-41, Sec. 8A.5

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Section 8A.5 of S.L. 2026-41 (Senate Bill 257) requires that a student receiving an Opportunity Scholarship be a resident of North Carolina who is eligible to attend a North Carolina public school both (i) at the time the student applies for a scholarship grant and (ii) at the beginning of each school year in which the student is eligible to receive a scholarship grant, unless the student is military-connected.

If the student is military-connected, the following applies:

- A military-connected student who is not a resident due to the military orders at the time of application can apply for an Opportunity Scholarship and the State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA) must still accept the application.
- A military-connected student who is not a resident due to military orders at the time of initial enrollment in a nonpublic school can still receive a scholarship grant for the first semester of the school year, but must provide proof of residency before receiving any additional scholarship grant funds.

If the funds required to award scholarship grants to military-connected students exceed the funds available for distribution, SEAA can allocate the necessary funds from the unencumbered balance of the Opportunity Scholarship Grant Fund reserve and report on the use of those funds to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division of the General Assembly by April 1 of the fiscal year.

This section became effective July 7, 2026, and applies beginning with applications for the award of scholarship grants in the 2026-2027 school year.

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