




Senate Fiscal Agency
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BILL ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 625 through 629 (as introduced 7-16-03)

Senate Bill 661 and 662 (as introduced 8-13-03)

Sponsor: Senator Nancy Cassis (S.B. 625)

Senator Gerald Van Woerkom (S.B. 626)

Senator Wayne Kuipers (S.B. 629)

Senator Irma Clark-Coleman (S.B. 628)

Senator Jason Allen (S.B. 661, 662, & 627)

Committee: Education

Date Completed: 12-11-03

CONTENT

The bills would amend various acts to permit the State to award scholarship and grant money to college and university students enrolled in theology, divinity, or religious education programs. Currently, students pursuing these studies are specifically prohibited from receiving financial aid from the State. The acts to be amended are described below.

Senate Bill 625

The bill would amend Public Act 102 of 1986, which provides for grants to part-time, independent students with financial need. In order to be eligible to participate in the grant program, a student must meet 11 criteria, one of which is that he or she may not be not enrolled in a program leading to a degree in theology or divinity.

Senate Bill 626

The bill would amend Public Act 208 of 1964, which established a State competitive scholarship program to award scholarships to students with financial need and academic promise, based on their performance on a competitive exam. The Act specifies that an applicant awarded a scholarship is not restricted in the choice of his or her course of study, except that a scholarship award cannot be made to a student enrolled in a program of study leading to a degree in theology, divinity, or religious education.

Senate Bill 627

The bill would amend the Legislative Merit Award Program Act, which requires the Michigan Higher Education Assistance Authority annually to award \$1,000 scholarships to students based on their performance on a national examination and without regard to their financial circumstances. To be eligible, a student must enroll in a recognized postsecondary education institution within four years after graduation from high school, and not be enrolled in a program of study leading to a degree in theology, divinity, or religious education.

Senate Bill 628

The bill would amend Public Act 273 of 1986, which established the Michigan Educational Opportunity Grant (MEOG) Program to award up to \$1,000 per student per year to postsecondary schools to help eligible students meet educational expenses. A student enrolled

in a program of study leading to a degree in theology, divinity, or religious education is prohibited from receiving an MEOG grant.

Senate Bill 629

The bill would amend Public Act 313 of 1966, which provides for tuition grants to resident students enrolled in an independent, nonprofit college or university. The amount of the grant is based on financial need. A student enrolled in a program of study leading to a degree in theology, divinity, or religious education may not receive this tuition grant.

Senate Bill 661

The bill would amend Public Act 105 of 1978, which provides for tuition differential grants to students enrolled in independent, nonprofit colleges or universities. A student enrolled in a program of study leading to a degree in theology or divinity is not eligible to receive a tuition differential grant.

Senate Bill 662

The bill would amend Public Act 75 of 1974, which provides for reimbursement to approved independent, nonprofit colleges and universities for a certain amount for each degree they confer on their students. A degree conferred in theology, divinity, or religious education is excluded from this reimbursement.

MCL 390.1283 (S.B. 625)
390.977 (S.B. 626)
390.1304 (S.B. 627)
390.1403 (S.B. 628)
390.994 (S.B. 629)
390.1274 (S.B. 661)
390.1023 (S.B. 662)

Legislative Analyst: Claire Layman

FISCAL IMPACT

The bills would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

The State appropriations for most of these programs are included in the annual Higher Education appropriation act. The Legislative Merit Award Program, the Tuition Differential Program, and the General Degree and Allied Health Degree Reimbursement Programs have not been funded in the State budget since fiscal years (FYs) 1980-81, 1984-85, and 2002-03, respectively. For FY 2003-04, a total of \$109.6 million is appropriated for the financial aid programs affected by these bills. With the exception of the Dental Degree Reimbursement Program (in which the dollars are a grant to the University of Detroit-Mercy for its southeastern Michigan dental clinics), the funds for these programs are distributed primarily based on the amount of the State appropriation and the financial need of the student. The addition of theology and divinity as eligible programs for State financial aid grants would not require additional State appropriations, but depending on the number of newly eligible students, could lower the amounts available to currently eligible students.

Fiscal Analyst: Ellen Jeffries

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.