

ASSEMBLY FAMILY, WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES  
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

**ASSEMBLY, No. 2428**

with committee amendments

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: NOVEMBER 25, 2002

The Assembly Family, Women and Children's Services Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 2428.

As amended by the committee, this bill establishes the "Statewide Tuition Waiver Program" in the Department of Human Services. The purpose of the program is to provide State-paid tuition to children who have been under the care and custody of the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS), and who are interested in pursuing college or vocational education at a public institution of higher education or county vocational school in this State.

A child is eligible to qualify for the program, if the child meets the following requirements at the time of the initial application for a tuition waiver:

- ! the child is 16 to 23 years of age;
- ! the child: has been in the care and custody of DYFS for a period of nine months or more following the child's sixteenth birthday; is or has been residing in an independent living arrangement, or transitional living program established pursuant to N.J.S.A.9:12A-2 et seq., operated or approved for payment by DYFS; or is or has been residing in an transitional living program located in the State of New Jersey and approved for payment by the federal government pursuant to the federal "Runaway and Homeless Youth Act";
- ! the child has received a high school diploma or a certificate of high school equivalency; and
- ! the child has been granted admission to a New Jersey public institution of higher education or a county vocational school.

A child who meets the program's eligibility requirements shall apply to the Commissioner of Human Services for a tuition waiver. Upon receipt of the application, the commissioner shall review the application and if the child meets the eligibility requirements, the commissioner shall approve the application and notify the appropriate public institution of higher education or county vocational school that

the child has qualified for a waiver.

Under the provisions of the bill, upon receiving approval for a tuition waiver, the child shall complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid to determine the level of need and eligibility for State and federal financial aid programs. If the sum of the tuition waiver plus other federal, State and institutional student financial assistance, except loans, exceeds the total cost of the child's tuition, the tuition waiver shall be reduced by the amount exceeding that cost. The child shall be required to enroll in a full-time degree, diploma or certificate program or course of undergraduate study and remain in good academic standing during the time the child qualifies for the tuition waiver.

Finally, the bill directs the Commissioner of Human Services, in consultation with the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education, to promulgate rules and regulations to effectuate the purposes of the bill.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

- ! lower the age at which a child may become eligible for the tuition waiver program from 18 years of age to 16 years of age;
- ! clarify that in order to qualify for the program, the child shall meet the eligibility requirements at the time of the initial application for a tuition waiver;
- ! clarify that a child may be eligible for the program if the child: has been in the care or custody of DYFS for a period of nine months or more following the child's sixteenth birthday; or is or has been residing in an independent living arrangement or transitional living program operated or approved for payment by DYFS or the federal government;
- ! require that eligibility for the program be limited to five years from the date the child applied to the commissioner for a tuition waiver, instead of five years following graduation from high school or the receipt of a certificate of high school equivalency, as originally provided in the bill;
- ! clarify that a child enrolled in a diploma or certificate program (as well as a degree program) can be approved for the program; and
- ! require that each child approved for the program shall remain in good academic standing during the time the child qualifies for a tuition waiver.