

Chapter 553

(House Bill 741)

AN ACT concerning

Higher Education – Institutions of Postsecondary Education – Consumer Protection Provisions

FOR the purpose of prohibiting certain private career schools and certain for-profit institutions of higher education from enrolling certain students in certain programs under certain circumstances; requiring the Maryland Higher Education Commission to create certain guaranty funds; specifying the uses of certain guaranty funds; ~~including a certain occurrence as grounds for reimbursement of certain students from certain guaranty funds;~~ requiring certain students to follow certain complaint procedures of certain institutions before making a claim to certain guaranty funds; authorizing certain students to make a certain claim to certain guaranty funds under certain circumstances; requiring a certain report to include certain information; requiring certain institutions of postsecondary education to ensure that a net price calculator is posted on its Web site in a certain location; requiring certain institutions to provide certain information to certain students under certain circumstances; providing for the application of a certain provision of this Act; and generally relating to consumer protection provisions that impact institutions of postsecondary education.

BY adding to

Article – Commercial Law

Section 13–320

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2013 Replacement Volume and 2015 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

Article – Education

Section 10–101(i) and (j)

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2014 Replacement Volume and 2015 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – Education

Section 11–203(d) and (e) and 15–118

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2014 Replacement Volume and 2015 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Commercial Law

13-320.

A PRIVATE CAREER SCHOOL OR FOR-PROFIT INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION, AS DEFINED UNDER § ~~10-101(j)~~ 10-101 OF THE EDUCATION ARTICLE, MAY NOT ENROLL A STUDENT IN A PROGRAM THAT IS INTENDED TO LEAD TO EMPLOYMENT IN A FIELD THAT REQUIRES LICENSURE OR CERTIFICATION IN THE STATE IF:

(1) SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE EDUCATIONAL COURSE OFFERINGS IN THE PROGRAM AT THE PRIVATE CAREER SCHOOL OR FOR-PROFIT INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION WILL NOT MEET THE STATE EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR LICENSURE OR CERTIFICATION;

~~(2) THE PRIVATE CAREER SCHOOL DOES NOT HOLD THE APPROPRIATE ACCREDITATION RECOGNIZED BY THE LICENSING ENTITY OF THE STATE; OR~~

(2) THE STATE ENTITY THAT LICENSES OR CERTIFIES INDIVIDUALS IN THE FIELD REQUIRES AS A CONDITION OF LICENSURE OR CERTIFICATION THAT THE PRIVATE CAREER SCHOOL OR FOR-PROFIT INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION ATTENDED BY THE INDIVIDUAL SATISFIES A STATUTORY OR REGULATORY REQUIREMENT, AND THE SCHOOL DOES NOT SATISFY THE REQUIREMENT; OR

(3) THE PRIVATE CAREER SCHOOL OR FOR-PROFIT INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IS AWARE OR REASONABLY SHOULD HAVE BEEN AWARE OF ANY OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENT OR OF THE PROGRAM FACTORS THAT WOULD MAY LEAD TO THE INELIGIBILITY OF THE STUDENT TO SEEK PURSUE OR OBTAIN LICENSURE OR CERTIFICATION IN THE STATE.

Article – Education

10-101.

(i) (1) “Institution of postsecondary education” means a school or other institution that offers an educational program in the State for individuals who are at least 16 years old and who have graduated from or left elementary or secondary school.

(2) “Institution of postsecondary education” does not include:

(i) Any adult education, evening high school, or high school equivalence program conducted by a public school system of the State; or

(ii) Any apprenticeship or on-the-job training program subject to approval by the Apprenticeship and Training Council.

(j) "Private career school" means a privately owned and privately operated institution of postsecondary education other than an institution of higher education that furnishes or offers to furnish programs, whether or not requiring a payment of tuition or fee, for the purpose of training, retraining, or upgrading individuals for gainful employment as skilled or semiskilled workers or technicians in recognized occupations or in new and emerging occupations.

11-203.

(d) (1) By [rule and] regulation, the Commission [may]:

(I) SHALL create and provide for the operation of [three] TWO separate guaranty funds for:

[(i)] 1. For-profit institutions of higher education; AND

[(ii)] 2. Private career schools; and

[(iii)] (II) [Institutions] MAY CREATE AND PROVIDE FOR THE OPERATION OF A GUARANTY FUND FOR INSTITUTIONS of higher education that are required to register under § 11-202.2 of this subtitle.

~~(2) (i) [The] SUBJECT TO PARAGRAPH (3) OF THIS SUBSECTION, THE private career school fund shall be used:~~

~~1. To [reimburse] PROVIDE A FULL REIMBURSEMENT TO any student at a private career school who is entitled to a refund of tuition and fees because the institution has failed to perform faithfully any agreement or contract with the student, INCLUDING CLOSURE OF THE SCHOOL, or failed to comply with any provision of this article; or~~

~~2. For any other function directly related to the original purpose of the fund deemed appropriate by the Secretary.~~

~~(ii) [The] SUBJECT TO PARAGRAPH (3) OF THIS SUBSECTION, THE for-profit institution of higher education fund shall be used to [reimburse] PROVIDE A FULL REIMBURSEMENT TO any student at a for-profit institution of higher education who is entitled to a refund of tuition and fees because the institution has failed to perform faithfully any agreement or contract with the student, INCLUDING CLOSURE OF THE SCHOOL, or failed to comply with any provision of this article.~~

(2) (i) THE FOR-PROFIT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION FUND AND THE PRIVATE CAREER SCHOOL FUND SHALL BE USED:

1. IN THE EVENT OF A SCHOOL CLOSURE BY A FOR-PROFIT INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION OR A PRIVATE CAREER SCHOOL, TO PROVIDE A FULL REFUND OF TUITION AND FEES INCURRED BY A STUDENT THAT HAVE NOT BEEN REIMBURSED OR DISCHARGED;

2. SUBJECT TO PARAGRAPH (3) OF THIS SUBSECTION, TO PROVIDE A REFUND, AS DETERMINED BY THE SECRETARY, OF TUITION AND FEES INCURRED BY A STUDENT THAT HAVE NOT BEEN REIMBURSED OR DISCHARGED, IF A FOR-PROFIT INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION OR A PRIVATE CAREER SCHOOL FAILS TO:

A. PERFORM FAITHFULLY ANY ENROLLMENT AGREEMENT OR CONTRACT WITH THE STUDENT; OR

B. COMPLY WITH ANY PROVISIONS OF THIS ARTICLE; OR

3. FOR ANY OTHER REASON DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF THE FUND DEEMED APPROPRIATE BY THE SECRETARY.

~~(iii)~~ **(II)** 1. The fund for institutions of higher education that are required to register under § 11-202.2 of this subtitle shall be used to reimburse any student at any of these institutions who is entitled to a refund of tuition and fees because the institution has failed to perform faithfully any agreement or contract with the student or failed to comply with any provision of this article.

2. A. After 3 years of claims history during which no claim against the fund has been sustained on behalf of a Maryland student participating in a fully online distance education program offered in the State by an institution registered under § 11-202.2 of this subtitle, the Commission shall exempt that institution from the requirement to contribute to the fund.

B. Notwithstanding subsubsubparagraph A of this subsubparagraph, an institution shall be required to contribute to the fund following a claim against the fund being sustained on behalf of a Maryland student participating in a fully online distance education program offered in the State by the institution.

3. Notwithstanding subsubparagraph 2 of this subparagraph, a student who takes courses from an institution exempted from contribution to the fund under subsubparagraph 2 of this subparagraph may make a claim against the fund in accordance with subsubparagraph 1 of this subparagraph.

~~(iv)~~ **(III)** 1. The funds shall be continuing, nonlapsing funds, not subject to § 7–302 of the State Finance and Procurement Article.

2. Any unspent portions of the funds may not be transferred or revert to the General Fund of the State, but shall remain in the funds to be used for the purposes specified in this subsection.

3. No other State money may be used to support the funds.

~~(v)~~ **(IV)** The Commission shall be subrogated to and may enforce the claim of any student to the extent of any actual or authorized reimbursement from the funds.

(3) (I) SUBJECT TO SUBPARAGRAPH (II) OF THIS PARAGRAPH, A STUDENT SHALL FOLLOW THE COMPLAINT PROCESS OF THE INSTITUTION BEFORE MAKING A CLAIM UNDER PARAGRAPH (2)(I)2 OF THIS SUBSECTION TO A GUARANTY FUND ESTABLISHED UNDER THIS SECTION.

(II) IF AN INSTITUTION DOES NOT RESPOND WITHIN 30 DAYS AFTER THE RECEIPT OF A COMPLAINT FILED UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (I) OF THIS PARAGRAPH, THE STUDENT MAY MAKE A CLAIM TO A GUARANTY FUND ESTABLISHED UNDER THIS SECTION.

~~[(3)]~~ **(4)** (i) Each for–profit institution of higher education or private career school that is required to obtain a certificate of approval and, subject to paragraph (2)(iii)2 of this subsection, each institution of higher education required to register under § 11–202.2 of this subtitle shall pay an annual fee into the appropriate fund.

(ii) The Commission shall determine the amount of the fee based on the probable amount of money needed for the funds for each fiscal year. If the moneys in the guaranty funds are insufficient to satisfy duly authorized claims, the participating institutions may be reassessed and shall pay the additional amounts required.

(iii) The Commission may not issue a certificate of approval or registration to, and shall revoke any certificate of approval or registration previously issued to, an institution that fails to pay any annual fee or reassessment.

(iv) The Commission shall deposit into the appropriate fund any penalty assessed against a for–profit institution of higher education, institution of higher education required to register under § 11–202.2 of this subtitle, or private career school, respectively, under the terms of § 11–204 of this subtitle.

~~[(4)]~~ **(5)** (i) The funds shall be maintained by the State Comptroller who may deposit the assets of the funds in any manner that is consistent with the purposes of the funds.

(ii) All interest or other return on fund investments shall be credited to the funds.

[(5)] (6) The Commission, through the Attorney General, may enforce any claim to which the Commission has been subrogated under this subsection.

(e) On or before December 1 each year, the Commission shall report to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2–1246 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly, regarding:

(1) The number of claims made against each guaranty fund established under this section;

(2) The type, size, and program of the institutions against which the claims are made;

(3) THE REASON FOR THE CLAIM, INCLUDING WHETHER THE PRIVATE CAREER SCHOOL OR FOR-PROFIT INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION CLOSED AND, IF SO, WHETHER SOME STUDENTS WERE ABLE TO FINISH THEIR PROGRAM DESPITE THE CLOSURE AND, IF SO, HOW MANY;

[(3)] (4) The number of claims that are approved and the associated payouts from the funds; and

[(4)] (5) The number of claims that are denied.

[15–118.] 11–408.

[(a)] This section applies to a public senior higher education institution and a community college in the State.]

(A) EACH INSTITUTION OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION THAT OPERATES IN THE STATE AND THAT IS REQUIRED TO MAKE A NET PRICE CALCULATOR PUBLICLY AVAILABLE ON ITS WEB SITE UNDER THE FEDERAL HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 2008, 20 U.S.C.A. § 1015A, SHALL ENSURE THAT THE NET PRICE CALCULATOR IS POSTED ON ITS WEB SITE IN A CONSPICUOUS LOCATION.

(b) (1) [Beginning in the 2014–2015 academic year, for] **FOR** all first–time, full–time undergraduate [freshmen, an institution of higher education] **STUDENTS AT AN INSTITUTION OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION THAT OPERATES IN THE STATE, THE INSTITUTION** shall provide to the student information on the cost of higher education at the institution by completing and mailing or providing electronically, at a minimum, the

information contained on the form known as the Financial Aid Shopping Sheet, as promulgated by the U.S. Department of Education.

(2) The Financial Aid Shopping Sheet or the information contained on the Financial Aid Shopping Sheet shall be mailed or provided electronically to the student at the same time that an award of federal financial aid is mailed or provided electronically to the student.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That § 11-203(d)(2)(i)1 of the Education Article, as enacted by Section 1 of this Act, does not apply to a for-profit institution of higher education that underwent an orderly closure on or before October 1, 2016, that included a teach-out plan:

(1) to teach-out the students enrolled in the for-profit institution of higher education at the time of closure;

(2) that requires a teach-out to be conducted by the for-profit institution of higher education;

(3) that requires a teach-out to be provided to the students using the same method of instructional delivery that was provided to the students on or before October 1, 2016; and

(4) that requires completion on or before December 31, 2017.

SECTION ~~2~~ 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2016.

Approved by the Governor, May 19, 2016.