

Chapter 836

(Senate Bill 795)

AN ACT concerning

**Higher Education – Private Career Schools ~~and~~, For-Profit Institutions of
Higher Education, and For-Profit Online Distance Education Programs –
Regulation**

FOR the purpose of prohibiting certain private career schools ~~and~~, for-profit institutions of higher education, and certain institutions of higher education required to register with the Maryland Higher Education Commission under certain circumstances from enrolling certain students unless the students are made aware of certain information in certain programs under certain circumstances; requiring certain schools or institutions to provide to certain students certain information before the student signs an enrollment agreement, completes registration, or makes a financial commitment to the school or institution; requiring certain information to be displayed in a certain manner; requiring certain schools and institutions to maintain certain records for a certain period of time; requiring the Maryland Higher Education Commission to require certain private career schools and for-profit institutions of higher education to furnish a performance bond or other form of financial guarantee that covers certain tuition liability irrevocable letter of credit in a certain amount and between the surety and the Commission in addition to and separate from certain other requirements; requiring a certain fund established for for-profit institutions of higher education to maintain a certain balance; requiring certain for-profit institutions of higher education to pay a certain fee into the fund; specifying that the requirement to pay a certain fee may not be satisfied by certain methods; requiring the Commission to make certain calculations and refund certain money or require the payment of a certain fee under certain circumstances; making a technical correction authorizing the Commission to create and provide for certain guaranty funds; making this Act an emergency measure; and generally relating to the regulation of private career schools ~~and~~, for-profit institutions of higher education, and for-profit online distance education programs.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
 Article – Commercial Law
 Section 13–320
 Annotated Code of Maryland
 (2013 Replacement Volume and 2017 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
 Article – Education
 Section 11–202.2(a) and (b)
 Annotated Code of Maryland
 (2018 Replacement Volume)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – Education

Section ~~11–203~~ 11–203(a) through (c) and (d)(1)

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2014 Replacement Volume and 2017 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) A private career school or for–profit institution of higher education, as defined under § 10–101 of the Education Article, OR A FOR–PROFIT INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION THAT IS REQUIRED TO REGISTER WITH THE MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION UNDER § 11–202.2 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 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 factors that may lead to the ineligibility of the student to pursue or obtain licensure or certification in the State.

(B) ~~(1) A BEFORE A PROSPECTIVE STUDENT SIGNS AN ENROLLMENT AGREEMENT, COMPLETES REGISTRATION, OR MAKES A FINANCIAL COMMITMENT TO A PRIVATE CAREER SCHOOL OR, FOR–PROFIT INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION, OR FOR–PROFIT INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION THAT IS REQUIRED TO REGISTER WITH THE COMMISSION, THE SCHOOL OR INSTITUTION SHALL PROVIDE TO THE STUDENT MAY NOT ENROLL A STUDENT UNLESS THE INSTITUTION MAKES THE STUDENT AWARE OF THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:~~

~~(1) TOTAL COST OF THE PROGRAM;~~

~~(2) LENGTH OF THE PROGRAM;~~

- ~~(3) REFUND INFORMATION;~~
- ~~(4) TRANSFERABILITY OF CREDITS; AND~~
- ~~(5) THE COHORT DEFAULT RATE OF THE INSTITUTION.~~

(I) THE TOTAL COST OF ATTENDANCE FOR THE PROGRAM, AS DEFINED IN 20 U.S.C. § 1087LL;

(II) THE LENGTH OF THE PROGRAM;

(III) THE NUMBER OF CLOCK OR CREDIT HOURS, OR THE EQUIVALENT INFORMATION;

(IV) THE SCHOOL OR INSTITUTION’S CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY;

(V) THE PROGRAM’S COMPLETION RATES FOR BOTH FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME STUDENTS; ~~AND~~

(VI) THE PROGRAM’S WITHDRAWAL RATES; AND

(VII) THE MEDIAN COMBINED LOAN DEBT FOR FEDERAL LOANS, INSTITUTIONAL LOANS, AND PRIVATE LOANS CERTIFIED BY THE SCHOOL OR INSTITUTION, FOR ALL STUDENTS WHO COMPLETED THE PROGRAM DURING THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED AWARD YEAR.

(2) (I) THE INFORMATION DESCRIBED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION SHALL BE PROMINENTLY DISPLAYED IN A LETTER OR E-MAIL TO A PROSPECTIVE STUDENT.

(II) THE LETTER OR E-MAIL MAY NOT CONTAIN ANY OTHER SUBSTANTIVE INFORMATION FROM THE SCHOOL OR INSTITUTION.

(3) THE SCHOOL OR INSTITUTION SHALL MAINTAIN RECORDS OF THE SCHOOL’S OR INSTITUTION’S EFFORTS TO PROVIDE THE INFORMATION DESCRIBED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION TO A PROSPECTIVE STUDENT FOR AT LEAST 5 YEARS AFTER THE STUDENT ENROLLS AT THE SCHOOL OR INSTITUTION.

Article – Education

11-202.2.

(a) (1) In this subtitle the following words have the meanings indicated.

(2) “Fully online distance education program in the State” means a program, originating outside the State, offered by an out-of-state institution in which:

(i) A student domiciled in Maryland enrolls;

(ii) 51% or more of the program is offered through electronic distribution; and

(iii) The Commission determines that the portion of the program offered at a location in the State, if any, does not require a certificate of approval under § 11-202 of this subtitle for the institution to operate in the State.

(3) “Out-of-state institution” means an institution of higher education whose primary campus exists outside Maryland and whose authority to grant degrees is conferred by another state.

(b) (1) An institution of higher education that enrolls Maryland students in a fully online distance education program in the State shall file an application to register with the Commission before or within 3 months of enrolling the first Maryland student.

(2) This section does not apply to an institution of higher education that enrolls Maryland students in a fully online distance education program in the State that:

(i) Is subject to program review by the Commission under § 11-206 or § 11-206.1 of this subtitle;

(ii) Participates in the Southern Regional Education Board’s Electronic Campus; or

(iii) Participates in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA).

(3) (i) After filing an application under paragraph (1) of this subsection, an institution that has enrolled a Maryland student before obtaining a registration under this section may continue to operate without a registration while the Commission considers the institution’s application, conducts a hearing concerning the institution’s application, or participates in judicial review regarding an institution’s application.

(ii) An institution that continues to operate without a registration under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph shall furnish a performance bond or other form of financial guarantee to the State in an amount set by regulation that is in addition to and separate from a performance bond or other form of financial guarantee required under § 11-203 of this subtitle.

11-203.

(a) (1) [The] **SUBJECT TO PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION, THE** Commission may require any institution of postsecondary education that is required to obtain a certificate of approval or an institution of higher education that is required to register under § 11-202.2 of this subtitle to furnish a performance bond or other form of financial guarantee for either the certificate of approval or the registration to the State conditioned that the institution will:

[(1)] (I) Perform faithfully all agreements or contracts it makes with its students; and

[(2)] (II) Comply with this article.

(2) IN ADDITION TO AND SEPARATE FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF SUBSECTION (D)(4) ~~AND (5)~~ OF THIS SECTION, THE COMMISSION SHALL REQUIRE EACH PRIVATE CAREER SCHOOL AND FOR-PROFIT INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION THAT OPERATES IN THE STATE, AND EACH FOR-PROFIT INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION THAT IS REQUIRED TO REGISTER WITH THE COMMISSION UNDER § 11-202.2 OF THIS SUBTITLE, TO FURNISH A PERFORMANCE BOND OR OTHER FORM OF FINANCIAL GUARANTEE THAT COVERS THE TOTAL MARYLAND STUDENT TUITION LIABILITY OF THE SCHOOL OR INSTITUTION IRREVOCABLE LETTER OF CREDIT IN AN AMOUNT EQUAL TO THE SCHOOL'S OR INSTITUTION'S NON-TITLE IV ADJUSTED GROSS TUITION AND FEES FOR THE PRIOR JULY 1 THROUGH JUNE 30.

(b) (1) [Any] **EXCEPT AS PROVIDED UNDER SUBSECTION (A)(2) OF THIS SECTION AND SUBJECT TO PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION,** ANY bond or guarantee required under this section shall be in the form and amount the Secretary requires.

(2) A PERFORMANCE BOND OR IRREVOCABLE LETTER OF CREDIT REQUIRED UNDER THIS SECTION SHALL BE BETWEEN THE SURETY AND THE COMMISSION.

(c) (1) The total liability of a surety on a bond or guarantee under this section may not exceed the amount of the bond or guarantee.

(2) If the total amount of claims filed against a bond or guarantee exceeds the amount of the bond or guarantee, the surety shall pay the amount of the bond or guarantee to the Secretary for distribution to the claimants.

(d) (1) By regulation, the Commission:

(i) ~~Shall~~ **MAY** create and provide for the operation of two separate guaranty funds for:

1. For-profit institutions of higher education; and
2. Private career schools; and

(ii) 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 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.~~

~~(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 subsubparagraph 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.~~

~~(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.~~

~~(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.~~

~~(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] (2)(II)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,] AN institution of higher education required to register under § 11-202.2 of this subtitle[,] or A private career school, respectively, under the terms of § 11-204 of this subtitle.~~

~~(5) (i) THE FUND REQUIRED TO BE ESTABLISHED FOR FOR PROFIT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION UNDER PARAGRAPH (1)(i)1 OF THIS SUBSECTION SHALL MAINTAIN A BALANCE THAT IS NOT LESS THAN THE AMOUNT OF MONEY THAT WOULD BE NEEDED TO REFUND ALL OF THE MARYLAND STUDENTS AT THE FOR PROFIT INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION THAT HAS THE LARGEST STUDENT TUITION LIABILITY IN THE STATE, LESS ANY MONEY THAT WOULD BE RECOVERABLE THROUGH FEDERAL LOAN DISCHARGE.~~

~~(H) 1. SUBJECT TO SUBSUBPARAGRAPH 2 OF THIS SUBPARAGRAPH, ON OR BEFORE AUGUST 1, 2018, EACH FOR PROFIT INSTITUTION SHALL PAY A FEE INTO THE FUND THAT IS EQUAL TO THE PERCENTAGE OF THE FUND THAT IS THE NUMBER OF MARYLAND STUDENTS WHO ATTEND THE INSTITUTION, MULTIPLIED BY THE AVERAGE MARYLAND STUDENT TUITION LIABILITY AT THAT INSTITUTION, DIVIDED BY THE TOTAL MARYLAND STUDENT TUITION LIABILITY AT FOR PROFIT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION THAT OPERATE IN THE STATE.~~

~~2. THE REQUIREMENT TO PAY A FEE UNDER THIS SUBPARAGRAPH MAY NOT BE SATISFIED BY FURNISHING A PERFORMANCE BOND OR OTHER FORM OF FINANCIAL GUARANTEE.~~

~~(HH) 1. ON OR BEFORE AUGUST 1, 2022, AND EVERY 4 YEARS THEREAFTER, THE COMMISSION SHALL RECALCULATE THE AMOUNT OF THE FUND AS DESCRIBED UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (I) OF THIS PARAGRAPH.~~

~~2. AFTER MAKING THE CALCULATION UNDER SUBSUBPARAGRAPH 1 OF THIS SUBPARAGRAPH, THE COMMISSION SHALL RECALCULATE THE FEE DESCRIBED UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (II) OF THIS PARAGRAPH.~~

~~3. AFTER MAKING THE CALCULATIONS DESCRIBED UNDER THIS SUBPARAGRAPH, THE COMMISSION SHALL:~~

~~A. REFUND THE DIFFERENCE IN THE FEES PAID BY AN INSTITUTION WHOSE SHARE IS LESS THAN THE AMOUNT OF THE FEE PAID BY THAT INSTITUTION 4 YEARS EARLIER; AND~~

~~B. REQUIRE AN INSTITUTION TO PAY A FEE INTO THE FUND IF THE INSTITUTION'S SHARE IS MORE THAN THE AMOUNT OF THE FEE, IF ANY, PAID BY THE INSTITUTION 4 YEARS EARLIER.~~

~~[(5)](6) (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.~~

~~[(6)] (7) 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;~~

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

~~(5) The number of claims that are denied.~~

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act is an emergency measure, is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public health or safety, has been passed by a ye and nay vote supported by three-fifths of all the members elected to each of the two Houses of the General Assembly, and shall take effect from the date it is enacted.

Enacted under Article II, § 17(c) of the Maryland Constitution, May 26, 2018.