

Chapter 405

(Senate Bill 991)

AN ACT concerning

Higher Education – Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program – Farmers

FOR the purpose of establishing the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Farmers; requiring the Office of Student Financial Assistance in the Maryland Higher Education Commission to assist in the repayment of a certain loan owed by certain farmers; requiring the Office, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, to adopt certain regulations; specifying that funds for the Program shall be as provided in the State budget; requiring a certain annual report to include certain information about the Program; altering the requirements of a certain annual report; making a stylistic change; defining certain terms; and generally relating to the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Farmers.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Article – Education
Section 18–1505
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2014 Replacement Volume and 2017 Supplement)

BY adding to
Article – Education
Section 18–28A–01 through 18–28A–05 to be under the new subtitle “Subtitle 28A.
Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Farmers”
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 – Education

18–1505.

Subject to § 2–1246 of the State Government Article, the Office [of Student Financial Assistance] shall report to the General Assembly by January 1 of each year on the implementation of the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program **AND THE REQUIREMENTS OF § 18–28A–05 OF THIS TITLE.**

SUBTITLE 28A. MARYLAND LOAN ASSISTANCE REPAYMENT PROGRAM FOR FARMERS.

18-28A-01.

(A) IN THIS SUBTITLE THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS INDICATED.

(B) “DEPARTMENT” MEANS THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

(C) “HIGHER EDUCATION LOAN” MEANS A LOAN THAT IS OBTAINED FOR TUITION, EDUCATION EXPENSES, OR LIVING EXPENSES FOR UNDERGRADUATE OR GRADUATE STUDY LEADING TO A DEGREE IN AGRICULTURE OR AN AGRICULTURE-RELATED FIELD, INCLUDING FARMING.

(D) “PROGRAM” MEANS THE MARYLAND LOAN ASSISTANCE REPAYMENT PROGRAM FOR FARMERS.

18-28A-02.

(A) THERE IS A MARYLAND LOAN ASSISTANCE REPAYMENT PROGRAM FOR FARMERS IN THE STATE.

(B) THE OFFICE SHALL ASSIST IN THE REPAYMENT OF A HIGHER EDUCATION LOAN OWED BY A FARMER WHO:

(1) HAS RECEIVED AN UNDERGRADUATE OR GRADUATE DEGREE IN AGRICULTURE OR AN AGRICULTURE-RELATED FIELD FROM A PUBLIC OR PRIVATE NONPROFIT INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION LOCATED IN THE STATE;

(2) HAS BEEN A FARMER FOR AT LEAST 5 YEARS BUT NOT MORE THAN 10 YEARS SINCE OBTAINING THE DEGREE;

(3) RECEIVES AN INCOME THAT IS LESS THAN THE MAXIMUM ELIGIBLE TOTAL INCOME LEVELS ESTABLISHED BY THE OFFICE, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT, INCLUDING ANY ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INCOME; AND

(4) SATISFIES ANY OTHER CRITERIA ESTABLISHED BY THE OFFICE.

18-28A-03.

THE OFFICE, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT, SHALL ADOPT REGULATIONS TO ESTABLISH:

(1) THE MAXIMUM STARTING INCOME FOR ELIGIBILITY IN THE PROGRAM;

(2) THE MAXIMUM TOTAL INCOME FOR ELIGIBILITY IN THE PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INCOME;

(3) THAT PRIORITY FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM SHALL BE GIVEN TO A FARMER WHO:

(I) GRADUATED FROM AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE IN THE LAST 10 YEARS;

(II) IS EMPLOYED AS A FARMER ON A FULL-TIME BASIS; AND

(III) AS DETERMINED BY THE DEPARTMENT IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT, USES SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL TECHNIQUES AND DEMONSTRATES ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP;

(4) A LIMIT ON THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE OFFICE IN REPAYING THE HIGHER EDUCATION LOAN OF A FARMER, BASED ON THE FARMER'S TOTAL INCOME AND OUTSTANDING HIGHER EDUCATION LOAN BALANCE;

(5) A PROCEDURE AND SCHEDULE FOR THE PAYMENT OF THE AMOUNT OF LOAN ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE OFFICE TO THE FARMER; AND

(6) AN ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE ELIGIBILITY OF EACH FARMER PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM.

18-28A-04.

FUNDS FOR THE PROGRAM SHALL BE PROVIDED ON AN ANNUAL BASIS IN THE STATE BUDGET.

18-28A-05.

AS PART OF THE ANNUAL REPORT REQUIRED UNDER § 18-1505 OF THIS TITLE, THE OFFICE SHALL INCLUDE INFORMATION REGARDING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM, INCLUDING:

(1) THE AMOUNT OF MONEY ALLOCATED FOR THE PROGRAM;

(2) THE NUMBER OF AWARDS MADE AND AMOUNTS OF THE AWARDS;

AND

(3) THE NUMBER OF APPLICANTS DENIED AN AWARD.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2018.

Approved by the Governor, May 8, 2018.