

# SENATE BILL 755

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By: **Senator A. Washington**

Introduced and read first time: January 27, 2025

Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Higher Education – Student Financial Assistance – Students in Informal**  
3 **Kinship Care Relationships**

4 FOR the purpose of requiring the Maryland Higher Education Commission to consider  
5 students who are in informal kinship care relationships as independent for the  
6 purpose of qualifying for certain student financial assistance; and generally relating  
7 to financial assistance for students in informal kinship care relationships.

8 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

9 Article – Education

10 Section 18–303 and 18–303.1(c)

11 Annotated Code of Maryland

12 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

13 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

14 Article – Education

15 Section 18–303.1(a) and (b)

16 Annotated Code of Maryland

17 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

18 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,

19 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

20 **Article – Education**

21 18–303.

22 (a) Subject to subsection [(e)] **(F)** of this section, each recipient of a Delegate  
23 Howard P. Rawlings Educational Excellence Award shall:

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 (1) Be accepted for admission in the regular undergraduate program at an  
2 eligible institution or be enrolled in a 2-year associate degree program in which the course  
3 work is acceptable for transfer credit for an accredited baccalaureate program in an eligible  
4 institution;

5 (2) Except as provided in § 18–303.2 of this subtitle, be a resident of this  
6 State;

7 (3) Demonstrate a definite financial need to:

8 (i) For an Educational Assistance Grant, the Office; or

9 (ii) For a Guaranteed Access Grant, the Office or an institution of  
10 higher education that complies with § 18–303.3 of this subtitle; and

11 (4) Accept any other conditions attached to the award.

12 (b) Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section **AND SUBJECT TO**  
13 **SUBSECTION (D) OF THIS SECTION**, each recipient of a Guaranteed Access Grant shall:

14 (1) Have completed high school or, failing to do so, on the recommendation  
15 of the recipient's high school principal, provide evidence satisfactory to the Office of  
16 extenuating circumstances;

17 (2) Begin college within 6 years of completing high school or, failing to do  
18 so, provide evidence satisfactory to the Office of extenuating circumstances;

19 (3) Be under the age of 26 years at the time of receiving the first award;

20 (4) Enroll in college as a full-time student;

21 (5) Subject to subsection [(d)] (E) of this section, have an annual family  
22 income below a poverty index determined by the Commission; and

23 (6) Satisfy any additional criteria the Commission may establish.

24 (c) (1) Subject to paragraph (2) of this subsection, an individual who has  
25 successfully obtained a high school diploma by examination under § 11–808 of the Labor  
26 and Employment Article is exempt from the requirements of subsection (b) of this section.

27 (2) An individual described under paragraph (1) of this subsection is  
28 eligible for a Guaranteed Access Grant if the individual:

29 (i) Has scored a passing score of at least 145 per module on the  
30 diploma by examination;

1 (ii) Begins college within 6 years of achieving the score described  
2 under item (i) of this paragraph or, failing to do so, provides evidence satisfactory to the  
3 Office of extenuating circumstances;

4 (iii) Is under the age of 26 years at the time of receiving the first  
5 award;

6 (iv) Enrolls in college as a full-time student; and

7 (v) Subject to [subsection (d)] **SUBSECTIONS (D) AND (E)** of this  
8 section, has an annual family income below a poverty index determined by the Commission.

9 **(D) (1) IN ADDITION TO MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS OF SUBSECTION**  
10 **(B) OF THIS SECTION, AN INDIVIDUAL WHO IS IN AN INFORMAL KINSHIP CARE**  
11 **RELATIONSHIP SHALL BE CONSIDERED INDEPENDENT BY THE COMMISSION FOR**  
12 **STATE STUDENT FINANCIAL AID PURPOSES.**

13 **(2) AN INDIVIDUAL UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION IS**  
14 **ELIGIBLE FOR A GUARANTEED ACCESS GRANT IF THE INDIVIDUAL:**

15 **(I) PARTICIPATES IN AN INFORMAL KINSHIP CARE**  
16 **RELATIONSHIP LICENSED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES; AND**

17 **(II) PROVIDES A COPY OF THE AFFIDAVIT SUBMITTED TO THE**  
18 **COUNTY BOARD VERIFYING THE INFORMAL KINSHIP CARE RELATIONSHIP.**

19 **[(d)] (E) (1)** To determine the annual family income eligibility of an applicant  
20 for a Guaranteed Access Grant, the Office or an institution of higher education that  
21 complies with § 18–303.3 of this subtitle may not consider an amount received by the  
22 applicant as an earned income credit under § 32 of the Internal Revenue Code.

23 (2) When awarding a Guaranteed Access Grant to a student who  
24 prequalified for the award under subsection **[(e)(1)] (F)(1)** or (2) of this section, the  
25 Commission shall use the annual family income determination used when the student  
26 prequalified.

27 **[(e)] (F) (1)** Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, a student  
28 in grade 7 or grade 8 who applies and qualifies for a Guaranteed Access Grant on the basis  
29 of financial need as established by the Commission shall prequalify for a Guaranteed Access  
30 Grant to be used at the time of enrollment in an institution of higher education by agreeing  
31 in writing, as a secondary and undergraduate student, to:

32 (i) Satisfy the attendance policy of the applicable school;

33 (ii) Provide information required by the Commission or the State  
34 Board of Education;

1 (iii) Apply for admission to an institution of higher education during  
2 the student's senior year of high school;

3 (iv) Complete and file on a timely basis applications for federal  
4 student aid for each year that the student plans to enroll in postsecondary education;

5 (v) Participate in the Next Generation Scholars of Maryland  
6 Program established in § 18–303.1 of this subtitle until the student graduates from high  
7 school and matriculates at an institution of higher education;

8 (vi) Maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.5 on a  
9 4.0 scale or its equivalent; and

10 (vii) Satisfy any other program requirements set by the Office, the  
11 Commission, the State Board of Education, or the State Department of Education.

12 (2) A student in grade 9 or grade 10 shall prequalify for a Guaranteed  
13 Access Grant to be used at the time of enrollment in an institution of higher education if  
14 the student:

15 (i) Otherwise meets the conditions of paragraph (1) of this  
16 subsection; and

17 (ii) 1. Is eligible for free or reduced priced meals; or  
18 2. Attends a school that participates in the U.S. Department  
19 of Agriculture Community Eligibility Provision and the student is identified by:

20 A. Direct certification; or

21 B. Income information provided by the family of the student  
22 to the local school system on an alternative form developed by the Department.

23 18–303.1.

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

25 (2) “Fund” means the Next Generation Scholars of Maryland Program  
26 Fund.

27 (3) “Program” means the Next Generation Scholars of Maryland Program.

28 (b) The Commission, in collaboration with the Department, county boards of  
29 education, county superintendents, and institutions of higher education, shall administer  
30 the Next Generation Scholars of Maryland Program.

1 (c) The Program shall provide guidance and services to students who qualify for  
2 a Guaranteed Access Grant in accordance with [~~§ 18–303(e)~~] **§ 18–303(F)** of this subtitle  
3 and students who qualify to receive free or reduced-price lunch under the National School  
4 Lunch Program to assist the students in successfully:

5 (1) Completing a college preparatory curriculum;

6 (2) Graduating from high school;

7 (3) Matriculating at an institution of higher education as defined in §  
8 18–303 of this subtitle; and

9 (4) Making timely progress to complete a degree program.

10 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July  
11 1, 2025.