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136th General Assembly
Regular Session
2025-2026

Sub. H. B. No. 644

To enact section 3333.1211 of the Revised Code to 1
create the Higher Education Evidence-Based 2
Innovation Fund and Grant Program. 3

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF OHIO:

Section 1. That section 3333.1211 of the Revised Code be 4
enacted to read as follows: 5

Sec. 3333.1211. (A) As used in this section: 6

(1) "State institution of higher education" has the same 7
meaning as in section 3345.011 of the Revised Code. 8

(2) "Student success program" means a program established 9
and operated by a state institution of higher education for the 10
purpose of improving postsecondary retention rates, completion 11
rates, or the time students take to earn a degree, excluding 12
post-baccalaureate programs, and with an emphasis on supporting 13
low-income students. 14

(3) "Evidence-based reform or practice" means an activity, 15
strategy, or intervention that either: 16

(a) Demonstrates a statistically significant effect on 17



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<u>improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on</u>	18
<u>one of the following:</u>	19
<u>(i) Strong evidence from at least one well-designed and</u>	20
<u>well-implemented experimental study;</u>	21
<u>(ii) Moderate evidence from at least one well-designed and</u>	22
<u>well-implemented quasi-experimental study;</u>	23
<u>(iii) Promising evidence from at least one well-designed</u>	24
<u>and well-implemented correlational study with statistical</u>	25
<u>controls for selection bias.</u>	26
<u>(b) Does both of the following:</u>	27
<u>(i) Demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality</u>	28
<u>research findings or positive evaluation that such activity,</u>	29
<u>strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes</u>	30
<u>or other relevant outcomes;</u>	31
<u>(ii) Includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of</u>	32
<u>such activity, strategy, or intervention.</u>	33
<u>(4) "Evidence tier-one reform or practice" means a reform</u>	34
<u>or practice that prior research suggests has promise for the</u>	35
<u>purpose of successfully improving student achievement or</u>	36
<u>attainment for low-income students and for which student</u>	37
<u>outcomes can be meaningfully measured.</u>	38
<u>(5) "Evidence tier-two reform or practice" means an</u>	39
<u>evidence tier-one reform or practice or other reform or practice</u>	40
<u>meeting similar criteria, that through rigorous evaluation,</u>	41
<u>including through the use of existing administrative data, as</u>	42
<u>applicable, has been found to improve student achievement or</u>	43
<u>attainment and for which the impact and cost-effectiveness can</u>	44
<u>be meaningfully measured.</u>	45

(6) "Evidence tier-three reform or practice" means an 46
evidence tier-two reform or practice, or other reform or 47
practice meeting similar criteria, that has been found to 48
produce sizable, important impacts on student achievement or 49
attainment and which can be expected to provide information 50
related to both of the following: 51

(a) Determining whether such impacts can be successfully 52
reproduced and sustained over time; 53

(b) Identifying the conditions in which such reform or 54
practice is most effective. 55

(B) The higher education evidence-based innovation fund is 56
created in the state treasury consisting of such amounts 57
designated for the purposes of the fund by the general assembly 58
and any private contributions. Amounts credited to the fund 59
shall be used to award competitive grants to state institutions 60
of higher education to support the adoption of evidence-based 61
reforms and practices. Unspent amounts in the fund shall not be 62
transferred to the general revenue fund. 63

(C) The chancellor of higher education shall establish and 64
administer a grant program under which the chancellor shall 65
distribute amounts from the higher education evidence-based 66
innovation fund on a competitive basis to state institutions of 67
higher education to support the development, piloting, scaling, 68
and assessment of student success programs. Preference shall be 69
given to applications that propose tier-three reforms or 70
practices. Beginning in 2027, the chancellor shall open a 71
competitive grant period at least once every two years. The 72
award term for a competitive grant may be more than two years. 73
Additional competitive grant periods may be held at the 74
discretion of the chancellor. The chancellor shall not award 75

grants in excess of the amount held in the higher education 76
evidence-based innovation fund. 77

(D) A competitive grant application shall include all of 78
the following: 79

(1) A plan to increase, with respect to all students 80
enrolled at the state institution of higher education, 81
attainment and completion rates or graduation rates, including 82
both of the following: 83

(a) A description of the evidence-based reform or practice 84
that would be used, including a summary of the most rigorous and 85
relevant studies available regarding the reform or practice and 86
whether the reform or practice would be an evidence tier-one, 87
two, or three reform or practice; 88

(b) A particular focus on serving low-income students 89
through student services and collaboration among two-year 90
programs, four-year programs, and workforce systems. 91

(2) A description of how the state institution of higher 92
education will, directly or in collaboration with other 93
accredited institutions of higher education or nonprofit 94
organizations, use the grant funds to implement or support the 95
evidence-based reform or practice; 96

(3) Annual benchmarks for student outcomes with respect to 97
the evidence-based reform or practice, including a description 98
of the availability of relevant data; 99

(4) A plan to evaluate the evidence-based reform or 100
practice that includes, to the maximum extent feasible, 101
experimental designs using random assignment or other research 102
methodologies that allow for the strongest possible causal 103
inferences when random assignment is not feasible; 104

<u>(5) A description of how the evidence-based reform or</u>	105
<u>practice will be sustained once the grant expires.</u>	106
<u>(E) The chancellor of higher education shall, in</u>	107
<u>consultation with the department of education and workforce and</u>	108
<u>the department of job and family services, develop criteria for</u>	109
<u>awarding the competitive grants. The criteria shall include</u>	110
<u>metrics related to all of the following:</u>	111
<u>(1) Student outcomes, including all of the following:</u>	112
<u>(a) Student retention;</u>	113
<u>(b) Student completion;</u>	114
<u>(c) Economic mobility of students;</u>	115
<u>(d) Student preparation for high-wage or high-need jobs.</u>	116
<u>(2) Student access, including both of the following:</u>	117
<u>(a) Net price of higher education for students;</u>	118
<u>(b) Support for low-income students.</u>	119
<u>(3) Sustainability and scale, including all of the</u>	120
<u>following:</u>	121
<u>(a) Number of students served;</u>	122
<u>(b) Scalability of program;</u>	123
<u>(c) Cost to administer the program;</u>	124
<u>(d) Sustainability of the program once the grant expires.</u>	125
<u>(4) Evidence and evaluation, including both of the</u>	126
<u>following:</u>	127
<u>(a) Availability of data to support evaluation and</u>	128
<u>research;</u>	129

<u>(b) The evidence tier of the evidence-based reform or</u>	130
<u>practice that would be used.</u>	131
<u>(F) Each state institution of higher education that</u>	132
<u>receives a grant shall use the grant funds to carry out the</u>	133
<u>programs and proposals described in the institution's grant</u>	134
<u>application.</u>	135