

As Introduced

136th General Assembly

Regular Session

2025-2026

H. B. No. 644

Representative Manning

To enact section 3333.1211 of the Revised Code to
create the Higher Education Evidence-Based
Innovation Fund and Grant Program and to require
the Chancellor of Higher Education to conduct a
study on retrenchment processes at state
institutions of higher education.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(a) Demonstrates a statistically significant effect on 20
improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on 21
one of the following: 22

(i) Strong evidence from at least one well-designed and 23
well-implemented experimental study; 24

(ii) Moderate evidence from at least one well-designed and 25
well-implemented quasi-experimental study; 26

(iii) Promising evidence from at least one well-designed 27
and well-implemented correlational study with statistical 28
controls for selection bias. 29

(b) Does both of the following: 30

(i) Demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality 31
research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, 32
strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes 33
or other relevant outcomes; 34

(ii) Includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of 35
such activity, strategy, or intervention. 36

(4) "Evidence tier-one reform or practice" means a reform 37
or practice that prior research suggests has promise for the 38
purpose of successfully improving student achievement or 39
attainment for low-income students and for which student 40
outcomes can be meaningfully measured. 41

(5) "Evidence tier-two reform or practice" means an 42
evidence tier-one reform or practice or other reform or practice 43
meeting similar criteria, that through rigorous evaluation, 44
including through the use of existing administrative data, as 45
applicable, has been found to improve student achievement or 46
attainment and for which the impact and cost-effectiveness can 47

be meaningfully measured.

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

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

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

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

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(C) The chancellor of higher education shall establish and
administer a grant program under which the chancellor shall
distribute amounts from the higher education evidence-based
innovation fund on a competitive basis to state institutions of
higher education to support the development, piloting, scaling,
and assessment of student success programs. Preference shall be
given to applications that propose tier-three reforms or
practices. Beginning in 2027, the chancellor shall open a
competitive grant period at least once every two years. The
award term for a competitive grant may be more than two years.

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Additional competitive grant periods may be held at the 77
discretion of the chancellor. The chancellor shall not award 78
grants in excess of the amount held in the higher education 79
evidence-based innovation fund. 80

(D) A competitive grant application shall include all of 81
the following: 82

(1) A plan to increase, with respect to all students 83
enrolled at the state institution of higher education, 84
attainment and completion rates or graduation rates, including 85
both of the following: 86

(a) A description of the evidence-based reform or practice 87
that would be used, including a summary of the most rigorous and 88
relevant studies available regarding the reform or practice and 89
whether the reform or practice would be an evidence tier-one, 90
two, or three reform or practice; 91

(b) A particular focus on serving low-income students 92
through student services and collaboration among two-year 93
programs, four-year programs, and workforce systems. 94

(2) A description of how the state institution of higher 95
education will, directly or in collaboration with other 96
accredited institutions of higher education or nonprofit 97
organizations, use the grant funds to implement or support the 98
evidence-based reform or practice; 99

(3) Annual benchmarks for student outcomes with respect to 100
the evidence-based reform or practice, including a description 101
of the availability of relevant data; 102

(4) A plan to evaluate the evidence-based reform or 103
practice that includes, to the maximum extent feasible, 104
experimental designs using random assignment or other research 105

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| <u>methodologies that allow for the strongest possible causal</u> | 106 |
| <u>inferences when random assignment is not feasible;</u> | 107 |
| <u>(5) A description of how the evidence-based reform or</u> | 108 |
| <u>practice will be sustained once the grant expires.</u> | 109 |
| <u>(E) The chancellor of higher education shall, in</u> | 110 |
| <u>consultation with the department of education and workforce and</u> | 111 |
| <u>the department of job and family services, develop criteria for</u> | 112 |
| <u>awarding the competitive grants. The criteria shall include</u> | 113 |
| <u>metrics related to all of the following:</u> | 114 |
| <u>(1) Student outcomes, including all of the following:</u> | 115 |
| <u>(a) Student retention;</u> | 116 |
| <u>(b) Student completion;</u> | 117 |
| <u>(c) Economic mobility of students;</u> | 118 |
| <u>(d) Student preparation for high-wage or high-need jobs.</u> | 119 |
| <u>(2) Student access, including both of the following:</u> | 120 |
| <u>(a) Net price of higher education for students;</u> | 121 |
| <u>(b) Support for low-income students.</u> | 122 |
| <u>(3) Sustainability and scale, including all of the</u> | 123 |
| <u>following:</u> | 124 |
| <u>(a) Number of students served;</u> | 125 |
| <u>(b) Scalability of program;</u> | 126 |
| <u>(c) Cost to administer the program;</u> | 127 |
| <u>(d) Sustainability of the program once the grant expires.</u> | 128 |
| <u>(4) Evidence and evaluation, including both of the</u> | 129 |
| <u>following:</u> | 130 |

(a) Availability of data to support evaluation and 131
research; 132

(b) The evidence tier of the evidence-based reform or 133
practice that would be used. 134

(F) Each state institution of higher education that 135
receives a grant shall use the grant funds to carry out the 136
programs and proposals described in the institution's grant 137
application. 138

Section 2. The Chancellor of Higher Education shall 139
conduct a feasibility study on including employment and earnings 140
criteria in the retrenchment processes described in section 141
3345.454 of the Revised Code. The study shall investigate 142
student outcomes for a variety of programs of study, including 143
comparing the wage outcomes of postsecondary degrees to those of 144
high school diplomas. The study shall also make recommendations 145
on improving the employment, earnings, and workforce alignment 146
of degree programs as part of program approval and retrenchment 147
processes. 148

Not later than one year after the effective date of this 149
section, the Chancellor shall submit a report on the study's 150
findings to the General Assembly in accordance with section 151
101.68 of the Revised Code. 152