

AN ACT

To amend sections 135.71 and 5919.34 of the Revised Code to make active duty members of the uniformed services eligible to participate in the homeownership savings linked deposit program and regarding Ohio National Guard Scholarship Program repayment interest.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio:

SECTION 1. That sections 135.71 and 5919.34 of the Revised Code be amended to read as follows:

Sec. 135.71. (A) The general assembly finds that making homeownership more attainable is an important part of fostering a robust and lasting population across the state. However, individuals often struggle to accumulate the financial resources needed to purchase a home. Accordingly, it is declared to be the public policy of the state through the homeownership savings linked deposit program to make available premium rate savings accounts for the down payment and closing costs associated with the purchase of a home.

(B) An eligible participant for the homeownership savings linked deposit program is an individual who is a resident of this state, or a member of the uniformed services, on active duty assignment, who is a resident of this state via a residency or domicile election in accordance with 50 U.S.C. 4001, and has applied for a homeownership savings account at an eligible savings institution. A member of the uniformed services, who is an eligible participant, may apply for a homeownership savings account at an eligible savings institution on or after the date affixed to the permanent change of station orders. As used in this division, "active duty" and "uniformed services" have the meanings defined in 10 U.S.C. 101.

(C) An eligible participant shall certify on the application that the funds in the homeownership savings account shall be used exclusively for eligible home costs.

(D) A homeownership savings account shall be owned by not more than one eligible participant and an eligible participant shall hold not more than one homeownership savings account per program period at any eligible savings institution.

(E) The treasurer of state shall report to the tax commissioner any information in the treasurer of state's possession deemed necessary by the tax commissioner to properly administer section 5747.85 of the Revised Code.

(F) Not later than January 31, 2027, the treasurer of state and the tax commissioner shall issue a report regarding the efficacy of the homeownership savings linked deposit program. The report shall include all of the following:

- (1) The number of homeownership savings accounts created;
- (2) The number of participating eligible savings institutions;
- (3) The total amount contributed into the accounts;
- (4) The average yield on the accounts;
- (5) Any other information the treasurer of state or tax commissioner deems relevant.

The report shall be delivered to the governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the president of the senate.

Sec. 5919.34. (A) As used in this section:

(1) "Academic term" means any one of the following:

(a) Fall term, which consists of fall semester or fall quarter, as appropriate;

(b) Winter term, which consists of winter semester, winter quarter, or spring semester, as appropriate;

(c) Spring term, which consists of spring quarter;

(d) Summer term, which consists of summer semester or summer quarter, as appropriate.

(2) "Eligible applicant" means any individual to whom all of the following apply:

(a) The individual does not possess a baccalaureate degree.

(b) The individual has enlisted, re-enlisted, or extended current enlistment in the Ohio national guard or is an individual to which division (F) of this section applies.

(c) The individual is actively enrolled as a full-time or part-time student for at least three credit hours of course work in a semester or quarter in a two-year or four-year degree-granting program at a state institution of higher education or a private institution of higher education, in a diploma-granting program at a state or private institution of higher education that is a school of nursing, or in a credential-certifying program, licensing program, trade certification program, or apprenticeship program for an in-demand occupation as identified by the adjutant general and the chancellor of higher education, in consultation with the governor's office of workforce transformation.

(d) The individual has not accumulated ninety-six eligibility units under division (E) of this section.

(3) "State institution of higher education" means any state university or college as defined in division (A)(1) of section 3345.12 of the Revised Code, community college established under Chapter 3354. of the Revised Code, state community college established under Chapter 3358. of the Revised Code, university branch established under Chapter 3355. of the Revised Code, or technical college established under Chapter 3357. of the Revised Code.

(4) "Private institution of higher education" means an Ohio institution of higher education that is nonprofit and has received a certificate of authorization pursuant to Chapter 1713. of the Revised Code, that is a private institution exempt from regulation under Chapter 3332. of the Revised Code as prescribed in section 3333.046 of the Revised Code, or that holds a certificate of registration and program authorization issued by the state board of career colleges and schools

pursuant to section 3332.05 of the Revised Code.

(5) "Tuition" means the charges imposed to attend an institution of higher education and includes general and instructional fees. "Tuition" does not include laboratory fees, room and board, or other similar fees and charges.

(B) There is hereby created a scholarship program to be known as the Ohio national guard scholarship program.

(C)(1) The adjutant general shall approve scholarships for all eligible applicants. The adjutant general shall process all applications for scholarships for each academic term in the order in which they are received. The scholarships shall be made without regard to financial need. At no time shall one person be placed in priority over another because of sex, race, or religion.

(2) The adjutant general shall develop and provide a written explanation that informs all eligible scholarship recipients that the recipient may become ineligible and liable for repayment for an amount of scholarship payments received in accordance with division (G) of this section. The written explanation shall be reviewed by the scholarship recipient before acceptance of the scholarship and before acceptance of an enlistment, warrant, commission, or appointment for a term not less than the recipient's remaining term in the national guard or in the active duty component of the United States armed forces.

(D)(1) Except as provided in divisions (I) and (J) of this section, for each academic term that an eligible applicant is approved for a scholarship under this section and either remains a current member in good standing of the Ohio national guard or is eligible for a scholarship under division (F)(1) of this section, the institution of higher education in which the applicant is enrolled shall, if the applicant's enlistment obligation extends beyond the end of that academic term or if division (F)(1) of this section applies, be paid on the applicant's behalf the applicable one of the following amounts:

(a) If the institution is a state institution of higher education, an amount equal to one hundred per cent of the institution's tuition charges;

(b) If the institution is a nonprofit private institution or a private institution exempt from regulation under Chapter 3332. of the Revised Code as prescribed in section 3333.046 of the Revised Code, an amount equal to one hundred per cent of the average tuition charges of all state universities;

(c) If the institution is an institution that holds a certificate of registration from the state board of career colleges and schools, the lesser of the following:

(i) An amount equal to one hundred per cent of the institution's tuition;

(ii) An amount equal to one hundred per cent of the average tuition charges of all state universities, as that term is defined in section 3345.011 of the Revised Code.

(2) The adjutant general and the chancellor may jointly adopt rules to require the use of other federal educational financial assistance programs, including such programs offered by the United States department of defense, for which an applicant is eligible based on the applicant's military

service. If such rules are adopted, the rules shall require that financial assistance received by a scholarship recipient under those programs be applied to all eligible expenses prior to the use of scholarship funds awarded under this section. Scholarship funds awarded under this section shall then be applied to the recipient's remaining eligible expenses.

(3) An eligible applicant's scholarship shall not be reduced by the amount of that applicant's benefits under "the Montgomery G.I. Bill Act of 1984," Pub. L. No. 98-525, 98 Stat. 2553 (1984).

(E) A scholarship recipient under this section shall be entitled to receive scholarships under this section for the number of quarters or semesters it takes the recipient to accumulate ninety-six eligibility units as determined under divisions (E)(1) to (3) of this section.

(1) To determine the maximum number of semesters or quarters for which a recipient is entitled to a scholarship under this section, the adjutant general shall convert a recipient's credit hours of enrollment for each academic term into eligibility units in accordance with the following table:

	1		2		3		4		5
A	Number of credit hours of enrollment in an academic term	equals		The following number of eligibility units if a semester	or		The following number of eligibility units if a quarter		
B	12 or more hours			12 units			8 units		
C	9 but less than 12			9 units			6 units		
D	6 but less than 9			6 units			4 units		
E	3 but less than 6			3 units			2 units		

(2) A scholarship recipient under this section may continue to apply for scholarships under this section until the recipient has accumulated ninety-six eligibility units.

(3) If a scholarship recipient withdraws from courses prior to the end of an academic term so that the recipient's enrollment for that academic term is less than three credit hours, no scholarship shall be paid on behalf of that person for that academic term. Except as provided in division (F)(3) of this section, if a scholarship has already been paid on behalf of the person for that academic term, the adjutant general shall add to that person's accumulated eligibility units the number of eligibility units for which the scholarship was paid.

(F) This division applies to any eligible applicant called into active duty on or after September 11, 2001. As used in this division, "active duty" means active duty pursuant to an executive order of the president of the United States, an act of the congress of the United States, or section 5919.29 or 5923.21 of the Revised Code.

(1) For a period of up to five years from when an individual's enlistment obligation in the Ohio national guard ends, an individual to whom this division applies is eligible for scholarships under this section for those academic terms that were missed or could have been missed as a result of the individual's call into active duty. Scholarships shall not be paid for the academic term in which an eligible applicant's enlistment obligation ends unless an applicant is eligible under this division for a scholarship for such academic term due to previous active duty.

(2) When an individual to whom this division applies withdraws or otherwise fails to complete courses, for which scholarships have been awarded under this section, because the individual was called into active duty, the institution of higher education shall grant the individual a leave of absence from the individual's education program and shall not impose any academic penalty for such withdrawal or failure to complete courses. Division (F)(2) of this section applies regardless of whether or not the scholarship amount was paid to the institution of higher education.

(3) If an individual to whom this division applies withdraws or otherwise fails to complete courses because the individual was called into active duty, and if scholarships for those courses have already been paid, either:

(a) The adjutant general shall not add to that person's accumulated eligibility units calculated under division (E) of this section the number of eligibility units for the academic courses or term for which the scholarship was paid and the institution of higher education shall repay the scholarship amount to the state.

(b) The adjutant general shall add to that individual's accumulated eligibility units calculated under division (E) of this section the number of eligibility units for the academic courses or term for which the scholarship was paid if the institution of higher education agrees to permit the individual to complete the remainder of the academic courses in which the individual was enrolled at the time the individual was called into active duty.

(4) No individual who is discharged from the Ohio national guard under other than honorable conditions shall be eligible for scholarships under this division.

(G) A scholarship recipient under this section who fails to complete the term of enlistment, re-enlistment, or extension of current enlistment the recipient was serving at the time a scholarship was paid on behalf of the recipient under this section is liable to the state for repayment of a percentage of all Ohio national guard scholarships paid on behalf of the recipient under this section; ~~plus. Such a scholarship recipient is also liable for interest at the rate of ten per cent per annum calculated from the dates the scholarships were paid, unless the reason the recipient failed to complete the term of enlistment, re-enlistment, or extension of enlistment was due to enlistment, warrant, commission, or appointment to an active duty or reserve component of the armed forces of~~

the United States. As used in this division, "armed forces" has the same meaning as in section 5903.01 of the Revised Code. This repayment percentage shall equal the percentage of the current term of enlistment, re-enlistment, or extension of enlistment a recipient has not completed as of the date the recipient is discharged from the Ohio national guard.

The attorney general may commence a civil action on behalf of the chancellor to recover the amount of the scholarships and the interest provided for in this division and the expenses incurred in prosecuting the action, including court costs and reasonable attorney's fees. A scholarship recipient is not liable under this division if the recipient's failure to complete the term of enlistment being served at the time a scholarship was paid on behalf of the recipient under this section is due to the recipient's death or discharge from the national guard due to disability.

(H) On or before the first day of each academic term, the adjutant general shall provide an eligibility roster to the chancellor and to each institution of higher education at which one or more scholarship recipients have applied for enrollment. The institution shall use the roster to certify the actual full-time or part-time enrollment of each scholarship recipient listed as enrolled at the institution and return the roster to the adjutant general and the chancellor. Except as provided in division (J) of this section, the chancellor shall provide for payment of the appropriate number and amount of scholarships to each institution of higher education pursuant to division (D) of this section. If an institution of higher education fails to certify the actual enrollment of a scholarship recipient listed as enrolled at the institution within thirty days of the end of an academic term, the institution shall not be eligible to receive payment from the Ohio national guard scholarship program or from the individual enrollee. The adjutant general shall report on a semiannual basis to the director of budget and management, the speaker of the house of representatives, the president of the senate, and the chancellor the number of Ohio national guard scholarship recipients, the size of the scholarship-eligible population, and a projection of the cost of the program for the remainder of the biennium.

(I) The chancellor and the adjutant general may adopt rules pursuant to Chapter 119. of the Revised Code governing the administration and fiscal management of the Ohio national guard scholarship program and the procedure by which the chancellor and the department of the adjutant general may modify the amount of scholarships a member receives based on the amount of other state financial aid a member receives.

(J) The adjutant general, the chancellor, and the director, or their designees, shall jointly estimate the costs of the Ohio national guard scholarship program for each upcoming fiscal biennium, and shall report that estimate prior to the beginning of the fiscal biennium to the chairpersons of the finance committees in the general assembly. During each fiscal year of the biennium, the adjutant general, the chancellor, and the director, or their designees, shall meet regularly to monitor the actual costs of the Ohio national guard scholarship program and update cost projections for the remainder of the biennium as necessary. If the amounts appropriated for the Ohio national guard scholarship program and any funds in the Ohio national guard scholarship reserve

fund and the Ohio national guard scholarship donation fund are not adequate to provide scholarships in the amounts specified in division (D)(1) of this section for all eligible applicants, the chancellor shall do all of the following:

(1) Notify each private institution of higher education, where a scholarship recipient is enrolled, that, by accepting the Ohio national guard scholarship program as payment for all or part of the institution's tuition, the institution agrees that if the chancellor reduces the amount of each scholarship, the institution shall provide each scholarship recipient a grant or tuition waiver in an amount equal to the amount the recipient's scholarship was reduced by the chancellor.

(2) Reduce the amount of each scholarship under division (D)(1)(a) of this section proportionally based on the amount of remaining available funds. Each state institution of higher education shall provide each scholarship recipient under division (D)(1)(a) of this section a grant or tuition waiver in an amount equal to the amount the recipient's scholarship was reduced by the chancellor.

(K) Notwithstanding division (A) of section 127.14 of the Revised Code, the controlling board shall not transfer all or part of any appropriation for the Ohio national guard scholarship program.

(L) The chancellor and the adjutant general may apply for, and may receive and accept grants, and may receive and accept gifts, bequests, and contributions, from public and private sources, including agencies and instrumentalities of the United States and this state, and shall deposit the grants, gifts, bequests, or contributions into the national guard scholarship donation fund.

SECTION 2. That existing sections 135.71 and 5919.34 of the Revised Code are hereby repealed.

Speaker _____ *of the House of Representatives.*

President _____ *of the Senate.*

Passed _____, 20____

Approved _____, 20____

Governor.

Am. S. B. No. 257

135th G.A.

The section numbering of law of a general and permanent nature is complete and in conformity with the Revised Code.

Director, Legislative Service Commission.

Filed in the office of the Secretary of State at Columbus, Ohio, on the ____ day of _____, A. D. 20 ____.

Secretary of State.

File No. _____ Effective Date _____