

By Senator Clary

4-544A-03

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to student tuition assistance;  
3           creating the Access to Better Learning and  
4           Education Grant Program; providing legislative  
5           findings with respect to education provided by  
6           for-profit colleges and universities; providing  
7           for the Department of Education to administer  
8           the grant program; providing requirements for  
9           eligibility; providing for the grant program to  
10          be funded under a formula based on planned  
11          enrollment and the state cost of funding such  
12          enrollment at public institutions; providing  
13          for an annual appropriation; requiring  
14          institutions to remit undisbursed funds to the  
15          department; limiting the period a student may  
16          receive a grant; providing an effective date.

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18 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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20           Section 1. The Access to Better Learning and Education  
21 Grant Program.--22           (1) The Legislature finds and declares that  
23 independent for-profit colleges and universities eligible to  
24 participate in the Access to Better Learning and Education  
25 Grant Program are an integral part of the higher education  
26 system in this state and that a significant number of state  
27 residents choose this form of higher education. The  
28 Legislature further finds that strong, viable independent  
29 for-profit colleges and universities reduce the tax burden on  
30 the residents of the state. Because the Access to Better  
31 Learning and Education Grant Program is not related to a

1 student's financial need or other criteria upon which  
2 financial aid programs are based, it is the intent of the  
3 Legislature that the Access to Better Learning and Education  
4 Grant Program not be considered a financial aid program but  
5 rather a tuition assistance program for state residents.

6 (2) The Access to Better Learning and Education Grant  
7 Program shall be administered by the Department of Education.  
8 The State Board of Education shall adopt rules for  
9 administering the program.

10 (3) The department shall issue an access grant to any  
11 full-time student seeking a baccalaureate degree who is  
12 registered at a for-profit college or university that is  
13 located in and chartered by the state; that is accredited by  
14 the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of  
15 Colleges and Schools; that grants baccalaureate degrees; that  
16 is not a state university or state community college; and that  
17 has a secular purpose, if the receipt of state aid by students  
18 at the institution would not have the primary effect of  
19 advancing or impeding religion or result in an excessive  
20 entanglement between the state and any religious sect.

21 (4) A person is eligible to receive an access grant  
22 if:

23 (a) He or she meets the general requirements,  
24 including residency, for student eligibility as provided in  
25 section 1009.40, Florida Statutes, except as otherwise  
26 provided in this section; and

27 (b)1. He or she is enrolled as a full-time  
28 undergraduate student at an eligible college or university in  
29 a program of study leading to a baccalaureate degree;

30 2. He or she is not enrolled in a program of study  
31 leading to a degree in theology or divinity; and

1           3. He or she is making satisfactory academic progress  
2 as defined by the college or university in which he or she is  
3 enrolled.

4           (5)(a) Funding for the Access to Better Learning and  
5 Education Grant Program shall be based on a formula comprised  
6 of planned enrollment and the state cost of funding  
7 undergraduate enrollment at public institutions under section  
8 1011.90, Florida Statutes. The amount of the access grant  
9 issued to a full-time student shall be an amount specified in  
10 the General Appropriations Act. The access grant may be paid  
11 on a prorated basis in advance of the registration period. The  
12 department shall make payments to the college or university in  
13 which the student is enrolled for credit to the student's  
14 account for payment of tuition and fees. Institutions shall  
15 certify to the department the amount of funds disbursed to  
16 each student and shall remit to the department any undisbursed  
17 advances or refunds within 60 days after the end of regular  
18 registration. A student may not receive the award for more  
19 than 9 semesters or 14 quarters, except as otherwise provided  
20 in section 1009.40(3), Florida Statutes.

21           (b) If the combined amount of the access grant issued  
22 pursuant to this section and all other scholarships and grants  
23 for tuition or fees exceeds the amount charged to the student  
24 for tuition and fees, the department shall reduce the grant  
25 issued under this section by an amount equal to the excess.

26           (6) If the number of eligible students exceeds the  
27 total authorized in the General Appropriations Act, an  
28 institution may use its own resources to assure that each  
29 eligible student receives the full benefit of the grant amount  
30 authorized.

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1 Section 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a  
2 law.

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5 SENATE SUMMARY

6 Creates the Access to Better Learning and Education Grant  
7 Program. Requires the Department of Education to  
8 administer the program. Specifies requirements for  
9 student eligibility. Requires that the grant program be  
10 funded according to a formula based on planned enrollment  
11 and the state cost of funding that enrollment at public  
12 institutions. Provides for an annual appropriation in the  
13 General Appropriations Act. (See bill for details.)  
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