

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2023

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HOUSE BILL 612
Committee Substitute Favorable 5/2/23

Short Title: Expand Criminal Justice Fellows Program.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

April 17, 2023

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO BROADEN THE ELIGIBLE COUNTIES FOR THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE
FELLOWS PROGRAM AND TO ALLOW FOR THE EXTENSION OF CERTAIN
PROGRAM DEADLINES.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. Article 2 of Chapter 17C of the General Statutes reads as rewritten:

"Article 2.

"North Carolina Criminal Justice Fellows Program.

"§ 17C-20. Definitions.

As used in this Article, the following definitions apply:

...

(5) ~~Eligible county. — A county with a population of less than 200,000 according to the latest federal decennial census.~~

...

"§ 17C-22. North Carolina Criminal Justice Fellows Program established; administration.

...

(c) Awards of Forgivable Loans. — The Program shall provide forgivable loans of up to three thousand one hundred fifty-two dollars (\$3,152.00) per ~~year for up to two years~~ year, totaling a maximum of six thousand three hundred four dollars (\$6,304.00) over two years, to selected individuals. If the Committee, in its sole discretion, determines that circumstances warrant an extension of the period over which the Program shall provide forgivable loans to a selected individual, the Committee may extend that period to three years but may not increase the maximum loan amount. The funds from the forgivable loans may be used for tuition, fees, and the cost of books. The Committee may determine the maximum amount of loan proceeds that may be applied to community college fees and course textbooks. The number of forgivable loans awarded annually shall not exceed 100 and the total number of recipients in the Program each year shall not exceed 200. The Committee shall select recipients no later than June 1 of each year.

(d) Eligibility Criteria. — An applicant must be domiciled in this State at the time of application, a resident for tuition purposes as defined in G.S. 116-143.1(a)(2), a high school graduate or a high school senior who will graduate from high school by the end of the current academic year, and demonstrate the intent upon completion of the Program to be employed in an eligible criminal justice ~~profession in an eligible county~~ profession. An applicant who has been convicted of any of the following is ineligible to receive a forgivable loan:

(1) A felony.



- (2) A crime for which the punishment could have been imprisonment for more than two years.
- (3) A crime or unlawful act defined as a Class B misdemeanor within the five-year period prior to the date of application.
- (4) Four or more crimes or unlawful acts defined as Class A misdemeanors, except the trainee may be enrolled if the last conviction date occurred more than two years prior to the date of application.
- (5) A combination of four or more Class A misdemeanors or Class B misdemeanors regardless of the date of conviction.

...

(h) Recipient Obligations. – A recipient must become and remain a ~~full-time~~ student at a North Carolina community college in an Applied Associate Degree in Criminal Justice or in a Committee-approved related field of study at all times during each of the recipient's two academic years of community college study and pursue continuously studies that will qualify the recipient to be employed in an eligible criminal justice profession upon graduation. The recipient must maintain a minimum cumulative 2.0 GPA throughout the course of study and also maintain appropriate credit hours for each semester to obtain an Applied Associate Degree in Criminal Justice or Committee-approved field of study within two years. If the Committee, in its sole discretion, determines that circumstances warrant an extension of the period within which the recipient must obtain an Applied Associate Degree in Criminal Justice or Committee-approved field of study, the Committee may extend that period by up to 12 additional months. The recipient must also accept employment ~~in an eligible county~~ in an eligible criminal justice profession for at least four out of five years following graduation. The Committee may adopt additional recipient obligations it deems appropriate.

(i) Annual Report. – The Program administrator, in coordination with the Committee, shall report no later than January 1, 2020, and annually thereafter, to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety regarding the following:

- (1) The number of forgivable loans awarded for each academic year disaggregated to include geographic and other demographic information.
- (2) Aggregated student performance, retention, and graduation rates.
- (3) Employment subsequent to completion of the Program broken down by ~~eligible county~~ and eligible criminal justice profession.
- (4) Forgiveness, termination, default, and repayment rates.
- (5) Retention rates of recipients within eligible criminal justice professions disaggregated by ~~eligible county~~.

"§ 17C-23. Terms of forgivable loans; receipt and disbursement of funds; default.

...

(b) Forgiveness. – The Committee shall forgive the loan and any interest accrued on the loan if, within five years after obtaining an Applied Associate Degree in Criminal Justice or Committee-approved field of study, the recipient is employed on a full-time basis for a period of at least four years ~~in an eligible county~~ in an eligible criminal justice profession. The recipient shall provide the Committee within 60 days of completion of the Program verification of the recipient's intent to seek employment in an eligible criminal justice ~~profession in an eligible county~~ profession. The recipient shall provide verification of employment to the Committee each year until the obligation is satisfied. The Committee shall also forgive the loan if it finds that it is impossible for the recipient to meet the terms of the loan, after or before graduation, due to death or permanent disability of the recipient.

...."

SECTION 2. This act is effective when it becomes law and applies to individuals participating in the Program on or after that date and to Committee extension determinations made on or after that date.