

Senate Bill 496

By: Senators Hill of the 4th, Seabaugh of the 28th, Harp of the 29th, Douglas of the 17th,
Smith of the 52nd and others

AS PASSED SENATE

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1 To amend Part 7 of Article 7 of Chapter 3 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia
2 Annotated, relating to HOPE scholarships and grants, so as to establish the HOPE college
3 opportunity grant; to amend Code Section 20-3-519 of the Official Code of Georgia
4 Annotated, relating to definitions relative to HOPE scholarships and grants, so as to revise
5 certain definitions; to provide for a definition; to provide for eligibility requirements; to
6 provide for scholarship amounts; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws;
7 and for other purposes.

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

9 **SECTION 0.5.**

10 Code Section 20-3-519 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to definitions
11 relative to HOPE scholarships and grants, is amended by revising subparagraph (A) of
12 paragraphs (6) and (6.1) as follows:

13 "(A) Located in Georgia and is currently or within the last two years has been
14 accredited by:

- 15 (i) The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools;
- 16 (ii) The Georgia Accrediting Commission;
- 17 (iii) The Georgia Association of Christian Schools;
- 18 (iv) The Association of Christian Schools International;
- 19 (v) The Georgia Private School Accreditation Council; or
- 20 (vi) The Southern Association of Independent Schools;

21 provided, however, that this shall not apply to any accrediting agency listed in this
22 subparagraph which includes as part of its accreditation standards minimum salary
23 requirements for any school system administrator, either directly or relative to the
24 salary of any other employee; or"

25 "(A) Located in Georgia and accredited as such by:

- 26 (i) The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools;
- 27 (ii) The Georgia Accrediting Commission;

28 (iii) The Georgia Association of Christian Schools;
 29 (iv) The Association of Christian Schools International;
 30 (v) The Georgia Private School Accreditation Council;
 31 (vi) The Accrediting Commission for Independent Study; or
 32 (vii) The Southern Association of Independent Schools;
 33 provided, however, that this shall not apply to any accrediting agency listed in this
 34 subparagraph which includes as part of its accreditation standards minimum salary
 35 requirements for any school system administrator, either directly or relative to the
 36 salary of any other employee; or"

37 SECTION 1.

38 Part 7 of Article 7 of Chapter 3 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
 39 relating to HOPE scholarships and grants, is amended by adding a new paragraph to Code
 40 Section 20-3-519, relating to definitions, to read as follows:

41 "(13.1) 'HOPE college opportunity grant' means a Helping Outstanding Pupils
 42 Educationally college opportunity grant for education awarded in accordance with Code
 43 Section 20-3-519.4."

44 SECTION 2.

45 Said part is further amended by revising Code Section 20-2-519.4, which is reserved, as
 46 follows:

47 "20-3-519.4.

48 (a) To be eligible for a HOPE college opportunity grant, a student seeking an associate or
 49 baccalaureate degree at an eligible public postsecondary institution shall:

50 (1) Meet residency requirements by:

51 (A) Meeting the requirements to be classified as a legal resident of Georgia as
 52 established by the program regulations promulgated by the Georgia Student Finance
 53 Commission which shall be based upon the in-state tuition policy of the board of
 54 regents and the in-state tuition guidelines set by the Technical College System of
 55 Georgia; and

56 (B)(i) If the student was classified as a legal resident of Georgia at the time of
 57 graduation from high school or from a home study program meeting the requirements
 58 of Code Section 20-2-690, then the student must have met the requirements set forth
 59 in subparagraph (A) of this paragraph for a period of at least 12 months immediately
 60 prior to the first day of classes for which the HOPE college opportunity grant is to be
 61 awarded; or

62 (ii) If the student was not classified as a legal resident at the time of graduation from
 63 high school or from a home study program meeting the requirements of Code Section
 64 20-2-690, then the student must have met the requirements set forth in subparagraph
 65 (A) of this paragraph for a period of at least 24 months immediately prior to the first
 66 day of classes for which the HOPE college opportunity grant is to be awarded.

67 Notwithstanding the foregoing, a dependent child of military personnel stationed in
 68 Georgia shall be deemed to be a legal resident of Georgia and, subject to meeting all other
 69 eligibility requirements, shall be eligible to receive the HOPE college opportunity grant as
 70 a freshman if the student graduated from a high school located in Georgia or from a home
 71 study program meeting the requirements of Code Section 20-2-690 that is located in
 72 Georgia;

73 (2) Meet enrollment standards by being admitted, enrolled, and classified as a full-time
 74 undergraduate student in a matriculated status at an eligible public postsecondary
 75 institution and by maintaining satisfactory academic progress in a course of study in
 76 accordance with the standards and practices used for federal Title IV programs by the
 77 eligible public postsecondary institution in which the student is enrolled;

78 (3) Meet further eligibility standards established by the Georgia Student Finance
 79 Commission which shall include criteria aimed at serving the neediest students; and

80 (4) Be a recipient of federal educational assistance funds awarded under the federal Pell
 81 Grant Program for any semester or quarter for which a HOPE college opportunity grant
 82 is sought under this Code section.

83 (b)(1) Except as set out in paragraph (2) of this subsection, a student may receive the
 84 HOPE college opportunity grant until the first of these events:

85 (A) The student has earned a baccalaureate degree; or

86 (B) The student has attempted at any postsecondary institution a total of 190 quarter
 87 hours or 127 semester hours.

88 (2) A student enrolled in an undergraduate or first professional degree program designed
 89 to be more than 190 quarter hours or 127 semester hours in length is eligible to receive
 90 the HOPE college opportunity grant for a total of 225 attempted quarter hours or 150
 91 attempted semester hours.

92 (c) A HOPE college opportunity grant may be applied to any portion of the student's cost
 93 of attendance as defined by the eligible public postsecondary institution that the student is
 94 attending.

95 (d) Subject to appropriations by the General Assembly, the Georgia Student Finance
 96 Commission shall determine HOPE college opportunity grant award amounts, which may

97 be determined on a sliding scale based on income. It is the intent of the General Assembly
98 that the HOPE college opportunity grants awarded pursuant to this Code section be targeted
99 at the neediest students. If at any time the commission determines that the funds available
100 to the commission are not sufficient to pay the grant to all eligible students, grants payable
101 for the remaining school terms shall be reduced by the commission on a pro rata basis.
102 (e) The funds necessary to provide for the HOPE college opportunity grants provided for
103 in this Code section shall come from and be subject to the amounts appropriated by the
104 General Assembly and provisions relating to the scholarship shortfall reserve subaccount
105 in Code Section 50-27-13.
106 Reserved."

107 **SECTION 3.**

108 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.