**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING ARTICLE 29 TO CHAPTER 53, TITLE 59 ENTITLED “SOUTH CAROLINA TECHNICAL EDUCATION TRANSITION PROGRAM” SO AS TO PROVIDE TUITION ASSISTANCE TO QUALIFIED EX‑FELONS, TO DEFINE NECESSARY TERMS, TO ESTABLISH CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS FOR A MEMBER OF THE PROGRAM, AND TO PROVIDE THAT A MEMBER OF THE PROGRAM MUST REIMBURSE THE BOARD IF HE FAILS TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROGRAM.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Chapter 53, Title 59 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Article 29

South Carolina Technical Education Transition Program

Section 59‑53‑2900. As used in this article:

(1) ‘Board’ means the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education.

(2) ‘Program’ means the South Carolina Technical Education Transition Program.

(3) ‘Qualified ex‑felon’ means any individual who:

(a) was convicted of a felony as listed in Section 16‑1‑90;

(b) as of the date of enrollment in the technical college, has not been convicted of another criminal offense; and

(c) has not been accepted for admission into the program at an earlier date or was accepted and either failed to meet the academic requirements or withdrew from the technical college.

Section 59‑53‑2910. (A) The board shall establish the South Carolina Education Transition Program to provide tuition assistance for a qualified ex‑felon to attend a technical college within this State. The board shall create a standardized application form for entry into the program and provide a template to each area commission or college commission provided for in Chapter 53, Title 59. The area commission or college commission shall accept applications on behalf of a qualified ex‑felon and send it to the board for approval. The board only may reject an applicant who is not deemed qualified pursuant to the provisions of this chapter.

(B) The program shall provide tuition assistance for a qualified ex‑felon in an amount equal to the difference between the tuition of the technical college and any grants or scholarships awarded to the applicant.

(C) Once an application is approved and the student is enrolled, the board shall directly transfer the funds to the technical college. The technical college may not prohibit the applicant from enrolling or subject the applicant to a fee arising from technical issues regarding the payment of tuition from the board.

Section 59‑53‑2920. A qualified ex‑felon who enrolls in a technical college and is accepted into the program must:

(1) attend no less than ninety percent of the total class meetings unless there is a documented medical emergency;

(2) maintain a 2.0 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale; and

(3) earn at least the average credit hours each year for the program offered by the technical college.

Section 59‑53‑2930. A qualified ex‑felon who fails to meet the academic requirements pursuant to Section 59‑53‑2920 or withdraws from the technical college before completing their degree program is deemed to have terminated his role in the program and must reimburse the board for the amount paid to the technical college program. The amount that the qualified ex-felon is responsible to reimburse must be proportional to the rate of completion of the technical college program. The qualified ex‑felon may not reapply to enroll in the South Carolina Technical Education Transition Program.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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