**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 59‑104‑20, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, RELATING TO CRITERIA FOR PALMETTO FELLOWS SCHOLARSHIP ELIGIBILITY, SO AS TO REMOVE MINIMUM STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES FROM SCHOLARSHIP CRITERIA; TO AMEND SECTION 59‑149‑50, RELATING TO CRITERIA FOR LIFE SCHOLARSHIP ELIGIBILITY, SO AS TO REMOVE MINIMUM STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES FROM SCHOLARSHIP CRITERIA; AND TO MAKE THESE PROVISIONS APPLICABLE JULY 1, 2022.

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

SECTION 1. Section 59‑104‑20(G) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(G)(1) In addition to qualifications established by regulation, to qualify for a Palmetto Fellows Scholarship, a student shall have:

(~~1~~a) ~~meet the following three criteria:~~

~~(a)~~ ~~a minimum score of 1200 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or an equivalent ACT score;~~

~~(b)~~ a cumulative 3.5 grade point ratio on the Uniform Grading Scale at the end of the junior or senior year~~;~~ and

~~(c)~~ rank in the top six percent of the class at the end of the sophomore, junior, or senior year. When calculating eligibility for Palmetto Fellows Scholarships in schools where the top six percent of the graduating class is two students or less, the top two students must be considered for the scholarship regardless of class rank. The top six percent of the graduating class must meet all Palmetto Fellows Scholarship eligibility requirements in order to receive a scholarship. If the top six percent of the class is not a whole number of students, the Commission on Higher Education shall round up to the next whole number of students eligible; or

~~(2)~~ ~~meet the following two criteria:~~

~~(a)~~ ~~a minimum score of 1400 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or an equivalent ACT score; and~~

(b) a cumulative 4.0 grade point ratio on the Uniform Grading Scale at the end of the junior or senior year.

(2) ~~Qualifying scores must be certified by the high school on the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship application by the scholarship application deadline.~~ For the purposes of meeting the rank criteria pursuant to this subsection, the existing high school rank of a South Carolina resident attending an out‑of‑state high school may be used provided it is calculated pursuant to a state‑approved, standardized grading scale at the respective out‑of‑state high school. If the Commission on Higher Education determines that a state‑approved standardized grading scale substantially deviates from the South Carolina Uniform Grading Scale, the state‑approved standardized grading scale shall not be used to meet the eligibility requirements for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship.

(3) Beginning with the 2022‑2023 School Year, no SAT score or ACT score may be criteria for eligibility for a Palmetto Fellows Scholarship.”

SECTION 2. Section 59‑149‑50 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 59‑149‑50. (A) To be eligible for a LIFE Scholarship, a student must be either a student who has graduated from a high school located in this State, a student who has completed at least three of the final four years of high school within this State, a home school student who has successfully completed a high school home school program in this State in the manner required by law, a student who has graduated from a preparatory high school outside this State, while a dependent of a parent or guardian who is a legal resident of this State and has custody of the dependent, or a student whose parent or guardian has served in or has retired from one of the United States Armed Forces within the last four years, paid income taxes in this State for a majority of the years of service, and is a resident of this State. These students also must meet the requirements of subsection (B) and be eligible for in‑state tuition and fees as determined pursuant to Chapter 112, Title 59 and applicable regulations. In addition, the student must have graduated from high school with a minimum of a 3.0 cumulative grade average on a 4.0 scale ~~and have scored 1100 or better on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or have the equivalent ACT score; provided that, if the student is to attend such a public or independent two‑year college or university in this State, including a technical college, the SAT requirement does not apply~~. If a student chooses to attend such a public or independent institution of this State and does not make ~~the required SAT score or~~ the required high school grade point average, as applicable, the student may earn a LIFE Scholarship after his freshman year if he meets the grade point average and semester credit hour requirements of subsection (B). For the purpose of meeting the rank criteria pursuant to this section, the existing high school rank of a South Carolina resident attending an out‑of‑state high school may be used provided it is calculated pursuant to a state‑approved, standardized grading scale at the respective out‑of‑state high school. If the Commission on Higher Education determines that a state‑approved standardized grading scale substantially deviates from the South Carolina Uniform Grading Scale, the state‑approved standardized grading scale shall not be used to meet the eligibility requirements for the LIFE Scholarship.

(B) Students receiving a LIFE Scholarship to retain it and students currently enrolled in an eligible institution to receive such a scholarship must earn a 3.0 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale and earn at least thirty credit hours each year for the maximum of semesters permitted at that institution by Section 59‑149‑60. The cumulative grade point average calculation, for purposes of LIFE scholarship eligibility, must be inclusive of the student’s grade point average at all public or independent institutions attended by the student.

(C) Students who were LIFE Scholarship recipients seeking a degree at such a public or independent institution of this State during their freshman or other year who failed to earn a cumulative 3.0 at the end of the term they attempted the requisite number of hours required by subsection (B) may regain eligibility if their cumulative grade average is a 3.0 at the end of the term they have attempted at least sixty hours if they are a sophomore or ninety hours if they are a junior.

(D)(1)(a) ~~Beginning with school year 2002‑2003, an entering freshman at a four‑year institution to be eligible for a LIFE Scholarship in addition to the other requirements of this chapter shall meet two of the following three criteria:~~

~~(1)~~ ~~have the grade point average required by this section;~~

~~(2)~~ ~~have the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or equivalent ACT score required by this section;~~

~~(3)~~ ~~be in the top thirty percent of his high school graduating class.~~ An entering freshman at a four‑year institution must have the grade point average required by this section, be in the top thirty percent of his high school graduating class, and meet the other requirements of this chapter to be eligible for a LIFE scholarship.

(b) For home school students and students whose high school graduating class is less than fifty students, the Commission on Higher Education may define alternative criteria for students to meet the requirement of item ~~(3)~~ (1)(a).

(2) After receipt of a LIFE Scholarship by an entering freshman beginning with school year 2002‑2003, a student shall meet the criteria established in this chapter to retain or regain the scholarship.

(3) For an exceptionally gifted student who is accepted into college without having attended high school, the Commission on Higher Education shall define alternative criteria for the student to qualify for a LIFE Scholarship.

(E) Beginning with the 2022‑2023 School Year, no SAT score or ACT score may be criteria fro eligibility for a LIFE scholarship.”

SECTION 3. This act takes effect July 1, 2022.

‑‑‑‑XX‑‑‑‑