

FIRST REGULAR SESSION

HOUSE BILL NO. 496

103RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE CHRIST.

1663H.011

DANA RADEMAN MILLER, Chief Clerk

AN ACT

To amend chapter 173, RSMo, by adding thereto two new sections relating to college tuition for first responders.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the state of Missouri, as follows:

Section A. Chapter 173, RSMo, is amended by adding thereto two new sections, to be known as sections 173.2655 and 173.2660, to read as follows:

173.2655. 1. This section and section 173.2660 shall be known and may be cited as the "First Responder Recruitment and Retention Act".

2. For purposes of this section and section 173.2660, the following terms mean:

(1) "Advanced emergency medical technician", as such term is defined in section 190.100;

(2) "Emergency medical technician", as such term is defined in section 190.100;

(3) "Firefighter", as such term is defined in section 87.120;

(4) "First responder", as such term is defined in section 67.145;

(5) "Legal dependent", as such term is defined by the United States Department of Education for purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid;

(6) "Line of duty", any action that a first responder is authorized or obligated by law, rule, or regulation to perform, related to or as a condition of employment or service;

(7) "Paramedic", as such term is defined in section 190.100;

(8) "Public institution of higher education", a public community college, state college, or state university;

EXPLANATION — Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets ~~thus~~ in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted from the law. Matter in **bold-face** type in the above bill is proposed language.

17 **(9) "Tuition", the charges and cost of tuition as set by the governing body of a**
18 **public institution of higher education.**

19 **3. A first responder shall be entitled to a waiver of one hundred percent of the**
20 **resident tuition charges of a public institution of higher education if the first responder:**

21 **(1) Possesses one of the following:**

22 **(a) A current, valid license issued by the department of health and senior**
23 **services authorizing such person to serve as an emergency medical technician, advanced**
24 **emergency medical technician, or paramedic;**

25 **(b) A current, valid license issued by the peace officer standards and training**
26 **commission authorizing such person to serve as a peace officer pursuant to the**
27 **provisions of chapter 590;**

28 **(c) A current, valid certificate issued by the division of fire safety authorizing**
29 **such person to serve as a firefighter;**

30 **(d) A current, valid license issued by the state board of nursing authorizing such**
31 **person to engage in the practice of professional nursing pursuant to the provisions of**
32 **chapter 335;**

33 **(e) A current, valid license issued by the board of healing arts authorizing such**
34 **person to practice medicine pursuant to the provisions of chapter 334;**

35 **(f) Any other current, valid license or certification that is required for such first**
36 **responder's employment; or**

37 **(g) For first responders who are employed in a position that does not require a**
38 **license or certificate described in paragraphs (a) to (f) of this subdivision, the certificate**
39 **of verification described in paragraph (h) of this subdivision; and**

40 **(h) For all first responders, a certificate of verification signed by the first**
41 **responder's supervisor or employer verifying that such first responder is currently**
42 **employed as a first responder who is trained and authorized by law or rule to render**
43 **emergency medical assistance or treatment;**

44 **(2) Meets all admission requirements of the public institution of higher**
45 **education;**

46 **(3) Pursues studies leading to a degree that relates to a career as a first**
47 **responder from an associate degree program or a baccalaureate degree program;**

48 **(4) Submits verification of the professional license or certificate, if applicable,**
49 **and certificate of verification required by subdivision (1) of this subsection to the**
50 **department of higher education and workforce development, in a form and manner as**
51 **prescribed by the department of higher education and workforce development; and**

52 **(5) Files with the department of higher education and workforce development**
53 **documentation showing proof of employment as a first responder and proof of residence**

54 in Missouri each year such first responder or such first responder's legal dependent
55 applies for and receives the tuition waiver.

56 4. A first responder may receive the tuition waiver pursuant to subsection 3 of
57 this section for up to five years if he or she otherwise continues to be eligible for the
58 tuition waiver. The five years of tuition waiver eligibility starts once the first responder
59 applies for and receives the tuition waiver for the first time and is available to such first
60 responder for the next five consecutive years.

61 5. A legal dependent of a first responder who satisfies the provisions of
62 subsection 3 of this section shall be entitled to a tuition waiver of one hundred percent of
63 the resident tuition charges of any public institution of higher education for an associate
64 or baccalaureate degree program if the legal dependent:

65 (1) Executes an agreement with such institution in accordance with the
66 provisions of section 173.2660;

67 (2) Has not previously earned a baccalaureate degree;

68 (3) Meets all admission requirements of the public institution of higher
69 education;

70 (4) Completes and submits to the United States Department of Education a Free
71 Application for Federal Student Aid;

72 (5) Submits a document to the public institution of higher education confirming
73 that the legal dependent has satisfied subdivision (4) of this subsection, to be submitted
74 in a form and manner as prescribed by the public institution of higher education; and

75 (6) Submits the verification required pursuant to subsection 8 of this section to
76 the public institution of higher education.

77 6. A legal dependent may receive the tuition waiver for up to five years if the
78 first responder and the legal dependent continue to be eligible for such tuition waiver.
79 The five years of tuition waiver eligibility starts once the legal dependent applies for and
80 receives the tuition waiver for the first time and is available to such legal dependent for
81 the next five consecutive years.

82 7. The public institution of higher education shall waive one hundred percent of
83 the first responder's or the legal dependent's tuition remaining due after subtracting
84 awarded federal financial aid grants and state scholarships and grants for an eligible
85 first responder or legal dependent during the time the first responder or legal dependent
86 is enrolled. To remain eligible, the first responder or legal dependent shall comply with
87 all requirements of the institution for continued attendance and award of an associate
88 degree or a baccalaureate degree.

89 8. (1) An application for a tuition waiver shall include a verification of the first
90 responder's satisfaction of the requirements of subsection 3 of this section. The first

91 responder shall include such verification when the first responder or the first
92 responder's legal dependent is applying to the public institution of higher education
93 in order to obtain a tuition waiver upon initial enrollment.

94 (2) The death of a first responder in the line of duty which occurs after
95 submission of an application for a tuition waiver shall not disqualify such first
96 responder's otherwise eligible legal dependent from receiving the tuition waiver. In such
97 case, in lieu of submitting the certificate of verification provided for in subdivision (1) of
98 this subsection, the legal dependent shall submit a statement attesting that:

99 (a) At the time of death, such first responder satisfied the requirements of
100 subdivision (1) of this subsection; and

101 (b) Such first responder died in the line of duty.

102 9. Within forty-five days after receipt of a completed application for a tuition
103 waiver, the public institution of higher education shall send written notice of the first
104 responder's or legal dependent's eligibility or ineligibility for the tuition waiver. If the
105 first responder or legal dependent is determined not to be eligible for the tuition waiver,
106 the notice shall include the reason or reasons for such determination.

107 10. The department of higher education and workforce development shall
108 promulgate rules to implement the provisions of this section and section 173.2660. Any
109 rule or portion of a rule, as that term is defined in section 536.010, that is created under
110 the authority delegated in this section shall become effective only if it complies with and
111 is subject to all of the provisions of chapter 536 and, if applicable, section 536.028. This
112 section and chapter 536 are nonseverable and if any of the powers vested with the
113 general assembly pursuant to chapter 536 to review, to delay the effective date, or to
114 disapprove and annul a rule are subsequently held unconstitutional, then the grant of
115 rulemaking authority and any rule proposed or adopted after August 28, 2025, shall be
116 invalid and void.

173.2660. 1. Each legal dependent who is a tuition waiver recipient pursuant to
2 the provisions of section 173.2655 shall execute an agreement as provided in this section.
3 Such agreement shall include the following terms, as appropriate:

4 (1) The tuition waiver recipient agrees to reside within the state of Missouri for a
5 period of five years following the use of the tuition waiver;

6 (2) Each year during the five-year period following use of the tuition waiver, the
7 tuition waiver recipient agrees to file a state income tax return and provide a copy of
8 such tax return to the department of higher education and workforce development to
9 document that such recipient still resides in the state of Missouri;

10 (3) If the tuition waiver recipient fails to annually file a tax return to prove
11 residency in the state of Missouri for the five-year period following the use of the tuition

12 waiver or fails to remain a resident of Missouri for the five-year period following the use
13 of the tuition waiver, the tuition waiver recipient agrees to repay the public institution of
14 higher education attended by such tuition waiver recipient the amount of tuition that
15 was waived for such individual if the public institution of higher education requests such
16 payment on the dates and in the amounts requested; and

17 (4) Any residency, filing, or payment obligation incurred by the tuition waiver
18 recipient under the first responder recruitment and retention act is cancelled in the
19 event of the tuition waiver recipient's total and permanent disability or death.

20 2. The five-year residency requirement begins once the legal dependent applies
21 for and receives the tuition waiver for the first time and continues until the tuition
22 waiver recipient's:

23 (1) Completion of the five-year tuition waiver eligibility period;

24 (2) Completion of a baccalaureate degree at a public institution of higher
25 education;

26 (3) Completion of an associate degree at a public community college and
27 notification to the department of higher education and workforce development that such
28 recipient does not intend to pursue a baccalaureate degree or additional associate degree
29 using tuition waivers pursuant to the first responder recruitment and retention act; or

30 (4) Notification to the department of higher education and workforce
31 development that such recipient does not plan to use additional tuition waivers
32 pursuant to the first responder recruitment and retention act.

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