A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO EDUCATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Hawaii left $10,000,000 in unclaimed federal Pell Grants on the table in 2018 -- enough to send roughly twenty-five hundred students to a university of Hawaii community college tuition-free. Nationally, nearly $2,600,000,000 in federal financial aid for higher education went unused by high school graduates from the class of 2018 who were eligible for a federal Pell Grant but did not complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). When students do not apply for federal student aid, many may revert to private student loans, which often have high interest rates and lack the consumer protections that federal student loans include.

The legislature further finds that in 2016, the State of Louisiana began requiring students to fill out the FAFSA because more than half of high school seniors were not completing the FAFSA paperwork. Louisiana is now ranked first in the nation for FAFSA completion, with an eighty-two per cent completion rate.
rate. Other jurisdictions, including California, Illinois, Indiana, Texas, and Washington, D.C., have either passed or considered a FAFSA completion requirement for schools. In Hawaii, the department of education has set a goal to have ninety per cent of high school seniors complete the FAFSA in the 2020 school year, although completion rates in recent years have remained closer to sixty per cent.

The purpose of this Act is to establish a working group to create a state plan to make FAFSA completion or an opt-out waiver for FAFSA completion a statewide graduation requirement by the 2022-2023 school year.

SECTION 2. (a) The department of education's existing working group dedicated to increasing awareness and completion of the FAFSA shall also create a state plan to make FAFSA completion or an opt-out waiver for FAFSA completion a statewide graduation requirement by the 2022-2023 school year.

(b) The working group shall:

(1) Include the following additional members for a broader perspective:

(A) A member of the non-profit sector;

(B) High school counselors; and
(C) A representative of the public charter school system;

(2) Consider the needs of both:

(A) Public and private universities; and

(B) The philanthropic community;

(3) Consider additional resources and supports that are necessary and available, including public-private partnerships, to ensure successful implementation of the state plan;

(4) Determine the best ways to ensure that the process for opting out of FAFSA completion by parents is simple and unconditional;

(5) Examine the feasibility of establishing regional pilot programs by complex area or island;

(6) Consider the best ways to provide greater support for students through the entire college application process, including providing the necessary guidance for students to actually enroll in college and be successful once the FAFSA is completed;

(7) Determine the best ways to protect family privacy, particularly for undocumented families, and to support
schools to provide hardship-based opt-out waivers when parents fail to respond to the FAFSA completion requirement; and

(8) Address any other issue the working group deems necessary.

(c) Members of the working group shall serve without compensation but shall receive reimbursement for expenses, including travel expenses, that are necessary for the performance of their duties.

(d) The working group shall be exempt from part I of chapter 92, Hawaii Revised Statutes; provided that the department of education shall make available to the public on the department of education's website the minutes of all meetings of the working group.

(e) The department of education shall provide administrative support for the working group, including preparing agendas and minutes, organizing meetings, and reporting on the activities and recommendations of the working group.

(f) The working group shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed
legislation, to the legislature, the superintendent of
education, and all complex area superintendents no later than
twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of
2021.

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.
Report Title:
DOE; FAFSA Working Group; State Plan; Graduation Requirement

Description:
Requires the Department of Education's existing Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) working group to create a state plan to make completion of the FAFSA or an opt-out waiver a statewide graduation requirement by the 2022-2023 school year. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD2)

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.