

JAN 22 2021

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO EDUCATION.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Hawaii left
2 \$10,000,000 in federal Pell Grants unclaimed in 2018 -- enough
3 to send roughly twenty-five hundred students to a university of
4 Hawaii community college tuition-free. Nationally, nearly
5 \$2,600,000,000 in federal financial aid for higher education
6 went unused by high school graduates from the class of 2018 who
7 were eligible for a federal Pell Grant but did not complete the
8 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). When students
9 do not apply for federal student aid, many students may revert
10 to private student loans, which often have high interest rates
11 and lack the consumer protections of federal student loans.

12 The legislature further finds that in 2016, Louisiana began
13 to require students to complete the FAFSA because more than half
14 of high school seniors were not completing the student aid
15 application. Louisiana is now ranked first in the nation for
16 FAFSA completion, with an eighty-two per cent completion rate.
17 Other jurisdictions, including California, Illinois, Indiana,



1 Texas, and Washington, D.C., have either enacted or considered a
2 FAFSA completion requirement for schools. In Hawaii, the
3 department of education has set a goal to have ninety per cent
4 of high school seniors complete the FAFSA in the 2020 school
5 year, although completion rates in recent years have remained
6 closer to sixty per cent.

7 The purpose of this Act is to establish a working group to
8 create a state plan to make FAFSA completion, or an opt-out
9 waiver for FAFSA completion, a statewide graduation requirement
10 by the 2023-2024 school year.

11 SECTION 2. (a) The department of education's existing
12 working group dedicated to increasing awareness and completion
13 of the FAFSA shall also create a state plan to make FAFSA
14 completion, or an opt-out waiver for FAFSA completion, a
15 statewide graduation requirement by the 2023-2024 school year.

16 (b) The working group shall:

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

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

20 (B) High school counselors; and



- 1 (C) A representative of the public charter school
2 system;
- 3 (2) Consider the needs of:
- 4 (A) Public and private universities; and
5 (B) The philanthropic community;
- 6 (3) Consider additional resources and supports that are
7 necessary and available, including public-private
8 partnerships, to ensure successful implementation of
9 the state plan;
- 10 (4) Determine the best ways to ensure that the process for
11 opting out of FAFSA completion by parents is simple
12 and unconditional;
- 13 (5) Examine the feasibility of establishing regional pilot
14 programs by complex area or island;
- 15 (6) Consider the best ways to provide greater support for
16 students through the entire college application
17 process, including providing the necessary guidance
18 for students to actually enroll in college and be
19 successful once the FAFSA is completed;
- 20 (7) Determine the best ways to protect family privacy,
21 particularly for undocumented families, and to support



1 schools to provide hardship-based opt-out waivers when
2 parents fail to respond to the FAFSA completion
3 requirement; and

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

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

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

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

20 (f) The working group shall submit a report of its
21 findings and recommendations, including any proposed



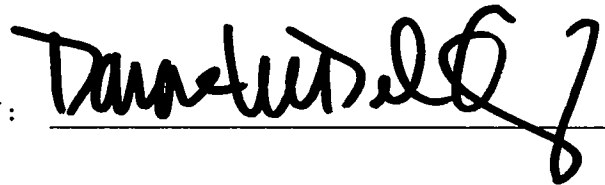
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1 legislation, to the legislature, the superintendent of
2 education, and all complex area superintendents no later than
3 twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of
4 2022.

5 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

6

INTRODUCED BY: _____

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Claitor", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

S.B. NO. 245

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 2023-2024 school year. Requires a report to the 2022 Legislature.

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

