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Act No. 136 (S.191). An act relating to New American educational grant opportunities

Subjects: Education; VSAC; advancement grant; residency requirement

Sec. 1 of this act amends 16 V.S.A. § 2846 to add an exception regarding the one-year residency eligibility requirement for certain Advancement Grant applicants.

Advancement Grants are administered through the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) and are for Vermonters pursuing nondegree education and training opportunities who have been residents of Vermont for one year. This act exempts Vermonters with certain immigration statuses from the one-year residency requirement, but still requires applicants to meet all other eligibility requirements in order to qualify for the grant.

Sec. 2 of this act creates a similar 3-year exception for the incentive grant program, which is administered through VSAC and is for Vermonters who need financial assistance and are pursuing undergraduate studies with the promise of completing a degree program. This section allows persons with certain immigration statuses (the same group of people who would qualify for the advancement grant residency exception under Sec. 1 of this act) to not be ineligible for the Vermont incentive grant program based on residency status. This language would still require applicants to meet all other eligibility requirements. This section is repealed on July 1, 2027.

Sec. 3 of this act adds section 2828 to Title 16, which establishes that a Vermont resident who is otherwise eligible for a State-funded financial aid program administered by VSAC shall not be ineligible solely on the basis of such resident's immigration status. It also requires VSAC to establish procedures and forms accordingly.

Sec. 4 of this act amends 16 V.S.A. § 2185 to prevent the Board of Trustees of the Vermont State Colleges Corporation from adopting in-state tuition policies that would discriminate against or exclude a person based solely on the person's immigration status, or lack thereof, if such person would otherwise qualify for and meet requirements for Vermont residency for in-state tuition purposes. It also requires any information collected pursuant to this section to be kept confidential.

Sec. 5 of this act amends 16 V.S.A. § 2282a to prevent the Board of Trustees of the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College from adopting in-state tuition policies that would discriminate against or exclude a person based solely on the person's immigration status, or lack thereof, if such person would otherwise qualify for and meet requirements for Vermont residency for in-state tuition purposes. It also requires any information collected pursuant to this section to be kept confidential.

Multiple effective dates, beginning July 1, 2024