



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Keith New, 717-720-2509
knew@pheaa.org

PHEAA's Board of Directors Authorizes Relief for Students as Pennsylvania Postsecondary Schools Respond to COVID-19 Pandemic

Harrisburg, PA (March 19, 2020) – PHEAA's Board of Directors took action today to provide for the temporary modification of certain program requirements of PHEAA-administered Pennsylvania student aid programs to ensure that recipients won't experience a disruption or reduction of funding due to operational changes made by schools in response to COVID-19.

"COVID-19 is creating historic challenges for students as postsecondary schools adopt operational changes that transform how higher education is delivered to students, including the widespread transition to online-only classes," said Representative Mike Peifer, PHEAA Board Chairman. "To keep pace with these changes, we need to quickly provide PHEAA with the administrative flexibility to safeguard students from any negative consequences that a school's pandemic response could cause."

Effective today, the PHEAA Board of Directors authorized the Agency to temporarily modify, suspend, or relax certain program requirements for Pennsylvania schools and students enrolled in the 2020 Winter or Spring term for the following programs that currently assist approximately 210,000 students:

- PA State Grant Program
- Institutional Assistance Grant (IAG) Program
- Matching Funds Programs
- Higher Education of the Disadvantaged (Act 101) Program
- Higher Education for Blind or Deaf Students Program
- Pennsylvania Internship Program
- Ready to Succeed Scholarship Program (RTSS)
- PA Targeted Industry Program (PA-TIP)

"Families in every corner of the Commonwealth are struggling to protect themselves while adapting their activities to this quickly spreading pandemic," said Senator Wayne D. Fontana, PHEAA Board Vice Chairman. "We have been coordinating our responses with the Governor's Office and appreciate his leadership as we all come together to help Pennsylvania students and families get through these challenging times."

(more)

One example of relief would be the temporary waiver of the PA State Grant Program's eligibility distinction between traditional in-classroom students, who currently qualify for a \$4,123 maximum award, and distance education students, who currently qualify for a \$3,092 maximum award, or 75 percent of a traditional award. This waiver would hold harmless thousands of initially in-classroom recipients who could otherwise lose their higher award amount, which has already been factored into their higher education funding plan for the year.

In order to give students and families more flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic, PHEAA's Board of Directors also acted today to extend the May 1 PA State Grant application deadline by 2 weeks to May 15.

This deadline applies to all renewal applicants and first-time applicants who plan to enroll in colleges, universities, or a college transfer program at 2-year public or private colleges (except community colleges and designated Pennsylvania Open Admission institutions).

To apply for a PA State Grant, applicants must first complete the 2020-21 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®). Applicants can access this form online at [PHEAA.org/FAFSA](https://pheaa.org/FAFSA) or fafsa.gov. Completing the FAFSA online saves time and reduces application and processing errors.

In addition to completing the FAFSA, first-time applicants must also submit a completed PA State Grant Form (SGF). First-time applicants who submit the FAFSA® online will be automatically redirected to the SGF by following the onscreen prompts on the confirmation page. First-time applicants who have already submitted their FAFSA but have not completed the SGF, will receive an email directing them to PHEAA's secure Account Access site for completion. Both applications are free to submit.

#

About PHEAA

Created in 1963 by the Pennsylvania General Assembly, the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) has evolved into one of the nation's leading student aid organizations. Today, PHEAA is a national provider of student financial aid services, serving millions of students and thousands of schools through its loan guaranty, loan servicing, financial aid processing, outreach and other student aid programs.

PHEAA's earnings are used to support its public service mission and to pay its operating costs, including administration of the Pennsylvania State Grant and other state-funded student aid programs. PHEAA continues to devote its energy, resources and imagination to developing innovative ways to ease the financial burden of higher education for students, families, schools and taxpayers.

PHEAA conducts its student loan servicing activities nationally as FedLoan Servicing and American Education Services (AES). For more information, visit www.pheaa.org.