

ONE HUNDRED FOURTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION - 2015
COMMITTEE STATEMENT
LB519

Hearing Date: Monday March 02, 2015
Committee On: Education
Introducer: Sullivan
One Liner: Provide for school and student aid, grants, and assistance as prescribed

Roll Call Vote - Final Committee Action:
Advanced to General File with amendment(s)

Vote Results:

Aye:	7	Senators Baker, Cook, Groene, Kolowski, Morfeld, Pansing Brooks, Sullivan
Nay:		
Absent:	1	Senator Schnoor
Present Not Voting:		

Verbal Testimony:

Proponents:

Senator Kate Sullivan
John Spatz
Jon Habben
Mike Lucas

Representing:

Introducer
Nebraska Association of School Boards
Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association
Schools Taking Action for Nebraska School Children's Education and York Public Schools

Opponents:

Tip O'Neill

Mary Sommers
Jodi Kupper

Representing:

Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Nebraska
University of Nebraska
Nebraska State College System

Neutral:

John Thomsen
Mike Baumgartner

Representing:

Nebraska Association for the Gifted
Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

Summary of purpose and/or changes:

Legislative Bill 519 would allocate the lottery funds dedicated to education for fiscal years 2016-17 through 2026-27. Recommendations would be due from the Education Committee regarding the allocation of the funds for the following 10 years on December 31, 2025. Legislative findings language would recommend replacing the current lottery fund allocations with General Fund appropriations.

The allocations for 2016-17 through 2026-27 would provide funding to the State Board of Education and the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education for innovative grants and to assist high school and postsecondary students with postsecondary education and certification costs associated with shortage area trades. Innovative grant projects funded by the State Board could be designated as best practices by the State Board of Education and be included in a new best practices allowance in the state aid formula.

Analysis by Section

Section 9-812 would be amended to provide for the allocation of lottery funds through the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund, which will come into existence on July 1, 2016 pursuant to current provisions. The allocations will apply to fiscal years 2016-17 through 2026-27. New provisions would require the Education Committee to submit recommendations to the Clerk of the Legislature on or before December 31, 2025, regarding how the fund should be allocated to best advance the educational priorities of the state for the following 10 years.

For fiscal years 2016-17 through 2026-27, 10% of the available balance for any fiscal year shall be retained in the fund with 90% allocated as follows:

- a. 40% to the State Board of Education for competitive innovation grants;
- b. 40% to the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education for competitive innovation grants;
- c. 10% to the State Board of Education to assist high school students with postsecondary and certification costs associated with trade occupations that are experiencing shortages of qualified workers; and
- d. 10% to the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education to assist students attending community colleges with postsecondary and certification costs associated with trade occupations that are experiencing shortages of qualified workers.

Legislative findings would state that the programs funded by the Education Innovation Fund immediately prior to termination should continue as state programs with funding from the General Fund, provided through the state budgeting process pursuant to the budget requests submitted by the Department of Education. Findings would also state that Nebraska Opportunity Grant Program is an important state program and that the allocation of lottery funds should be fully replaced with funding from the General Fund provided through the budgeting process pursuant to the budget requests from the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education. Lottery funding for Opportunity Grants and for programs through the Education Innovation Fund will terminate on June 30, 2016. Obsolete provisions would be deleted.

New Section 2 would require the State Board of Education to establish a competitive innovation grant program with funding from the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund.

Grantees could be a school district, an educational service unit (ESU), or a combination of entities that include at least one school district or ESU. Grantees that consist of a combination of entities must designate a participating school district or ESU to act as the fiscal agent and administer the program funded by the grant. The State Board could only award grants when the board deems the application to be sufficiently innovative and to have a high chance of success.

Applications would be required to describe:

- a. Specific measurable objectives for improving education outcomes for early childhood, elementary, middle school, or high school students or for improving the transitions between any successive stages of education or between education and the workforce;
- b. The method for annually evaluating progress toward measurable objectives, with the final evaluation due 6 months prior to the end of the grant;
- c. The potential to be both scalable and replicable; and
- d. Any cost savings that could be achieved by reductions in other programs if the funded program is successful.

Following the final evaluation for each grant, the State Board of Education would designate the project as:

- a. Representing a best practice;
- b. A model for a state supported program; or
- c. A local issue for further study.

For projects recommended as best practices after receiving a grant for 4 years, the State Board would be authorized to establish criteria allowing such best practices to be included in a new best practices allowance. The criteria would:

- a. Specify qualifications to participate in the allowance for each best practice;
- b. Specify a best practices dollar amount based on 85% of the estimated costs related to each best practice that would

not otherwise be incurred without the best practice and that do not replace other costs;

c. Specify an accountability process which will result in a future aid correction if a district is found to be in violation of any of the qualifications; and

d. Specify any other criteria deemed relevant by the State Board.

The Department would certify by each November 1st the amount of the best practices cost to each qualifying district and the total best practices cost for all qualifying districts to be included in the calculation of state aid for the next school fiscal year.

The State Board would report to the Clerk of the Legislature by December 1st of each odd-numbered year on all grants, including the results of the evaluations for each grant, and on the best practices allowance if the allowance has been implemented.

No more than 5% of the funds from the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund could be retained for administration. The State Board would be required to adopt and promulgate rules and regulations.

New Section 3 would require the Coordinating Commission to establish a competitive innovation grant program with funding from the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund.

Grantees could be a public postsecondary education institution or a combination of entities that include at least one participating public postsecondary education institution designated to act as the fiscal agent and administer the program funded by the grant. The Commission could only award grants when the Commission deems the application to be sufficiently innovative and to have a high chance of success.

Applications would be required to describe:

a. Specific measurable objectives for improving postsecondary education or transitions into postsecondary education or into the workforce;

b. The method for annually evaluating progress toward measurable objectives, with the final evaluation due 6 months prior to the end of the grant;

c. The potential for the project to be both scalable and replicable; and

d. Any cost savings that could be achieved by reductions in other programs if the funded program is successful.

Following the final evaluation for each grant, the Commission would designate the project as:

a. Representing a best practice;

b. A model for a state supported program; or

c. An institutional issue for further study.

The Commission would report to the Clerk of the Legislature by December 1st of each odd-numbered year on all grants, including the results of the evaluations for each grant.

No more than 5% of the funds from the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund could be retained for administration. The Commission would be required to adopt and promulgate rules and regulations.

New Section 4 would require the State Board to establish a program with lottery funds to provide assistance to high school students for postsecondary education and certification costs associated with obtaining credentials for trade occupations experiencing shortages. High school students who begins a course of study for a trade occupation that is on the list developed by the Department of Labor would continue to be eligible for the course of study until the student graduates from high school or otherwise ceases to be a high school student in Nebraska. No more than 5% of the funds received from the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund could be retained for administration. The State Board would be required to adopt and promulgate rules and regulations.

New Section 5 would require the Coordinating Commission to establish a program with lottery funds to provide assistance to community college students with postsecondary education and certification costs associated with obtaining credentials for trade occupations experiencing shortages. Community college students who begins a course of study for a trade occupation that is on the list developed by the Department of Labor would continue to be eligible for the course of study for 3 years or until the student completes such course of study, whichever occurs first. No more than 5% of the

funds received from the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund could be retained for administration. The Commission would be required to adopt and promulgate rules and regulations.

New Section 6 would require the Department of Labor to certify to the Department of Education and the Coordinating Commission a list of trade occupations that are experiencing shortages of qualified workers by December 31 of each year. The list would include the specific coursework, certifications, or other postsecondary credentials sought by employers and for which there is a shortage for each listed trade occupation.

Section 79-1001 would be amended by adding the new best practices allowance to the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act (TEEOSA).

New Section 8 would provide for the best practices allowance for each qualifying school district. The allowance would equal to the lesser of (i) the best practices cost certified to the district, or (ii) the product of the certified best practices cost multiplied by the ratio of \$1 million divided by the aggregate total of the best practices cost certified for all qualifying districts. 50% of the best practices allowance shall be paid to the school district as best practices aid.

Section 79-1003 would be amended by adding the best practices allowance to the allowances subtracted from the general fund operating expenditures to calculate the adjusted general fund operating expenditures for each district.

Section 79-1007.11 would be amended by adding the best practices allowance to the allowances included in formula need.

Section 79-1017.01 would be amended to include best practices aid in local system formula resources. Obsolete language would be eliminated.

Section 85-1412 would be amended to include establishing the new programs in the duties of the Coordinating Commission.

Section 79-2306 would be outright repealed to harmonize with the removal of obsolete language from section 9-812. The section provides for a one-time payments of lottery funds for the acquisition and upgrade of equipment and software necessary to administer the examinations for diplomas of high school equivalency. The lottery funds were allocated in the 2013-14 fiscal year.

Explanation of amendments:

The Committee Amendments replace the original provisions. The amendments would incorporate modified provisions related to Legislative Bills 36, 355, 379, 380, 519, 520, 527 and 589 to allocate the lottery funds dedicated to education for fiscal years 2016-17 through 2020-21 and require the Education Committee to conduct a study of postsecondary education affordability.

The allocations would provide funding for a new Expanded Learning Opportunity Grant Program Act, new innovative grants awarded by the State Board of Education and by the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, a new Community College Gap Assistance Program Act, the existing Excellence in Teaching Act, and the existing Nebraska Opportunity Grant Act. Innovative grant projects funded by the State Board could be designated as best practices by the State Board of Education and be included in a new best practices allowance in the state aid formula for school districts. The Expanded Learning Opportunity (ELO) Grant Program would promote academic achievement programs that are held outside of school hours in high-need school districts. The Community College Gap Assistance Program to provide funding to community colleges to award community college gap assistance to students in eligible non-credit accumulating programs.

Recommendations would be due from the Education Committee on December 31, 2019 regarding the allocation of the funds for 5 years after the expiration of these proposed allocations. Recommendations regarding postsecondary education affordability would be due December 31, 2015.

Lottery Allocations

Section 1 would amend 9-812 to provide for the allocation of lottery funds through the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund, which will come into existence on July 1, 2016 pursuant to current provisions. The allocations will apply to fiscal years 2016-17 through 2020-21. Under current law, current lottery funding for Opportunity Grants and for programs through the Education Innovation Fund will terminate on June 30, 2016. New provisions would require the Education Committee to submit recommendations to the Clerk of the Legislature on or before December 31, 2019, regarding how the fund should be allocated to best advance the educational priorities of the state for the 5 year period beginning with 2021-22. Language regarding investment of funds would be streamlined and obsolete provisions would be deleted.

For fiscal years 2016-17 through 2020-21, 10% of the available balance for any fiscal year shall be retained in the fund with the remaining 90% allocated as follows:

- a. 1% for a new Expanded Learning Opportunity Grant Program Act;
- b. 10% to the State Board of Education for competitive innovation grants;
- c. 10% to the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education for competitive innovation grants;
- d. 9% for a new Community College Gap Assistance Program Act;
- e. 8% for the slightly modified Excellence in Teaching Act; and
- f. 62% for the current Nebraska Opportunity Grant Act.

Section 38 would amend 85-1920 to allow the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Fund to continue receiving lottery funds and by delaying the termination of the fund until June 30, 2021. The fund would terminate under current law on June 30, 2016.

Section 41 would outright repeal 79-2306 to harmonize with the removal of obsolete language from section 9-812. The section provides for a one-time payments of lottery funds for the acquisition and upgrade of equipment and software necessary to administer the examinations for diplomas of high school equivalency. The lottery funds were allocated in the 2013-14 fiscal year.

Innovative Grants and Best Practices Allowance

Section 2 would provide for the State Board of Education to establish a competitive innovation grant program with funding from the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund.

Grantees could be a school district, an educational service unit (ESU), or a combination of entities that include at least one school district or ESU. Grantees that consist of a combination of entities must designate a participating school district or ESU to act as the fiscal agent and administer the program funded by the grant. The State Board could only award grants when the board deems the application to be sufficiently innovative and to have a high chance of success.

Applications would be required to describe:

- a. Specific measurable objectives for improving education outcomes for early childhood, elementary, middle school, or high school students or for improving the transitions between any successive stages of education or between education and the workforce;
- b. The method for annually evaluating progress toward measurable objectives, with a summative evaluation of the progress to that date due to the Education Committee and the State Board on July 1, 2019;
- c. The potential to be both scalable and replicable; and
- d. Any cost savings that could be achieved by reductions in other programs if the funded program is successful.

Following the summative evaluation due on July 1, 2019 for each grant, the State Board of Education would designate the project as:

- a. Representing a best practice;
- b. A model for a state supported program; or
- c. A local issue for further study.

For projects recommended as best practices, the State Board would be authorized to establish criteria allowing such best practices to be included in a new best practices allowance beginning with aid calculated for 2021-22. The criteria would:

- a. Specify qualifications to participate in the allowance for each best practice;
- b. Specify a best practices dollar amount based on 85% of the estimated costs related to each best practice that would not otherwise be incurred without the best practice, that do not replace other costs, and that are not included in another allowance;
- c. Specify an accountability process which will result in a future aid correction if a district is found to be in violation of any of the qualifications; and
- d. Specify any other criteria deemed relevant by the State Board.

Beginning in 2020, the Department would certify by each November 1st the amount of the best practices cost to each qualifying district and the total best practices cost for all qualifying districts to be included in the calculation of state aid for the next school fiscal year.

The State Board would report to the Clerk of the Legislature by December 1st of each year on all grants, including the results of the evaluations for each grant, and on the best practices allowance if the allowance has been implemented. No more than 5% of the funds from the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund could be retained for administration. The State Board would be required to adopt and promulgate rules and regulations to carry out the provisions, including, but not limited to, application, selection, and annual evaluation reporting procedures.

Section 3 would provide for the Coordinating Commission to establish a competitive innovation grant program with funding from the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund.

Grantees could be a public postsecondary education institution or a combination of entities that include at least one participating public postsecondary education institution designated to act as the fiscal agent and administer the program funded by the grant. The Commission could only award grants when the Commission deems the application to be sufficiently innovative and to have a high chance of success.

Applications would be required to describe:

- a. Specific measurable objectives for improving postsecondary education or transitions into postsecondary education or into the workforce;
- b. The method for annually evaluating progress toward measurable objectives, with a summative evaluation of the progress to that date due to the Education Committee and the Commission on July 1, 2019;
- c. The potential for the project to be both scalable and replicable; and
- d. Any cost savings that could be achieved by reductions in other programs if the funded program is successful.

Following the final evaluation for each grant, the Commission would designate the project as:

- a. Representing a best practice;
- b. A model for a state supported program; or
- c. An institutional issue for further study.

The Commission would report to the Clerk of the Legislature by December 1st of each year through 2021 on all grants, including the results of the evaluations for each grant.

No more than 5% of the funds from the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund could be retained for administration. The Commission would be required to adopt and promulgate rules and regulations to carry out the provisions, including, but not limited to, application, selection, and annual evaluation reporting procedures.

Section 11 would amend 79-1001 by adding the new best practices allowance to the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act (TEEOSA).

Section 12 would provide for the best practices allowance for each qualifying school district beginning with aid calculated

for 2021-22. The allowance would equal to the lesser of (i) the best practices cost certified to the district, or (ii) the product of the certified best practices cost multiplied by the ratio of \$1 million divided by the aggregate total of the best practices cost certified for all qualifying districts. 50% of the best practices allowance would be paid to the school district as best practices aid.

Section 13 would amend 79-1003 by adding the best practices allowance to the allowances subtracted from the general fund operating expenditures to calculate the adjusted general fund operating expenditures for each district.

Section 14 would amend 79-1007.11 by adding the best practices allowance to the allowances included in formula need.

Section 15 would amend 79-1017.01 to include best practices aid in local system formula resources. Obsolete language would be eliminated.

Section 26 would amend 85-1412 to include establishing the innovative grant program and administering the Community College Gap Assistance Program and the Community College Gap Assistance Program Fund in the duties of the Coordinating Commission.

Excellence in Teaching Act

Section 4 would amend 79-8,134 by adding clarifying the purpose of the Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program with regard to the retention of resident students and graduates as teachers in the state. The current provisions express a purpose of retaining the students and graduates as teachers in the accredited or approved public and private schools of Nebraska. Teaching in educational service units would be added and technical corrections would be made to language regarding public schools.

Section 5 would amend 79-8,137 by eliminating a requirement that contracts pursuant to the Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program provide notice that funding for new loans terminates on June 30, 2016.

Section 6 would amend 79-8,137.01 by including courses of study that lead to an endorsement in a shortage area in the programs eligible for which a teacher could receive a forgivable loan pursuant to the Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program.

Section 7 would amend 79-8,137.02 by adding clarifying the purpose of the Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program with regard to the retention of resident students and graduates as teachers in the state. The current provisions express a purpose of retaining the students and graduates as teachers in the accredited or approved public and private schools of Nebraska. Teaching in educational service units would be added and technical corrections would be made to language regarding public schools.

Section 8 would amend 79-8,137.03 by including completion of an endorsement program as an alternative to completion of a graduate program for the terms of agreements under the Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program.

Section 9 would amend 79-8,137.04 by eliminating a requirement that contracts pursuant to the Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program provide notice that funding for new loans terminates on June 30, 2016. In addition, the terms for loan forgiveness would be modified for funds received on or after July 1, 2016. The amount that would generally be forgiven each year would be reduced from \$3,000 to \$1,500. For those qualifying for accelerated loan forgiveness, the amount that would be forgiven would be reduced from \$6,000 to \$1,500 for the first year and to \$3,000 for subsequent years.

Section 10 would amend 79-8,137.05 by revising the allocation of the Excellence in Teaching Cash Fund. The first \$400,000 would continue to be allocated to the Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program. The Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program would then receive up to \$800,000, instead of the entirety of the remaining funds. Any funds available in excess of \$1,200,000 would be distributed evenly between the two programs. Obsolete language would be eliminated.

Expanded Learning Opportunity Grants

Section 16 would create the Expanded Learning Opportunity Grant Program Act.

Section 17 would provide that the purpose of the ELO Grant Program Act is to promote academic achievement outside of school hours in high-need school districts.

Section 18 would provide definitions for the ELO Grant Program Act.

Community Learning Center would be defined as provided under 20 U.S.C. 7171(b) as the section existed on January 1, 2015, which is as follows: an entity that-

(A) assists students in meeting State and local academic achievement standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and mathematics, by providing the students with opportunities for academic enrichment activities and a broad array of other activities (such as drug and violence prevention, counseling, art, music, recreation, technology, and character education programs) during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session (such as before and after school or during summer recess) that reinforce and complement the regular academic programs of the schools attended by the students served; and

(B) Offers families of students served by such center opportunities for literacy and related educational development.

Department would mean the State Department of Education;

Expanded Learning Opportunity Grant Program would mean a school-community partnership that provides participating elementary and secondary age students and their families with programming and other support activities and services after school and on weekends, holidays, and other hours when school is not in session through a mix of programs and services that (a) complement but do not duplicate elementary and secondary school day learning and (b) create opportunities to strengthen school-community partnerships that provide students and their families the supports they need to be successful in school; and

High-need school district would mean a school district in which 40% or more of the enrolled students qualify for free and reduced priced meals under the federal school lunch program, 7 C.F.R. part 210, as the section existed on January 1, 2015.

Section 19 would require the Nebraska Department of Education to establish and administer the ELO Grant Program. Grants would be provided to community-based organizations who partner with schools in high needs districts to implement expanded learning opportunities programs.

Section 20 would provide that priorities for grants are to be given to: 1) Continue existing 21st Century Community Learning Centers funded by the federal 21st Century Community Learning Center program and 2) Support new expanded learning opportunity programs in areas of the state with a high percentage of at-risk children who are not receiving a federal 21st Century Community Learning Center program.

Section 21 would require NDE to establish a grant application process and timeline for applicants to submit proposals. Proposals shall include (which list is not exhaustive):

- a. A grant planning period;
- b. A requirement to participate in periodic evaluations of the program as specified by NDE;
- c. Requires ELO program to coordinate with existing programs;
- d. Requires a plan to coordinate and utilize local, state, federal and philanthropic funding sources. Also requires ELO Grant Program funds to be matched on a one-to-one basis by community or partner contributions;
- e. Use of a sliding fee scale and other funding sources listed above.

Grant applications would also be required to demonstrate how the ELO program will provide academic enrichment to students through high quality proven methods and which will complement a student's regular academic programs. Grant programs shall include two or more of the following (which list is not exhaustive):

- a. Core education subjects of reading, writing, mathematics, and science;
- b. Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education;
- c. Remedial education activities;
- d. Tutoring services, including, but not limited to, tutoring services provided by senior citizen volunteers;
- e. Programs for English language learners that emphasize language skills and academic achievement;
- f. Mentoring programs; and
- g. Programs that provide assistance to students who have been truant, suspended, or expelled to allow such students to improve their academic achievement;

In addition, grant proposals would be required to:

- a. Demonstrate how their ELO program will improve student academic achievement;
- b. Demonstrate that its ELO programs are being provided by organizations in partnership with the school and that the organization or grant program being implemented, have had or will have success in raising student academic achievement; and
- c. Demonstrate that the ELO program aligns with the school districts learning objectives or behavior codes.

The Department would be required to make an effort to fund ELO programs in rural and urban areas.

Section 22 would require public schools receiving an ELO Program Grant to contact a representative of all nonpublic schools in the schools attendance area about the grant, to see if there is the potential to participate in the ELO Program.

Section 23 would require grant recipients to cooperate with evaluators and supervise and administer the collection of parent, teacher, and student and collaboration data. Grant recipients would also be required to designate a qualified evaluation professional to ensure data collection, perform annual self-assessments, monitor the progress of grant purposes and assist in developing local evaluation reports.

Section 24 would require NDE to submit a report to the Legislature by January 1 of odd numbered years and allow NDE to use up to five percent of the total appropriation for the ELO Grant Programs for administration, evaluation and technical assistance.

Section 25 would provide that the State Board of Education, in consultation with NDE, may promulgate and adopt rules and regulations to carry out the purposes of this act.

Community College Gap Assistance

Section 27 would provide that sections 27 thru 37 of the act may be cited as the Community College Gap Assistance Program Act.

Section 28 would provide for purposes of the Community College Gap Assistance Program Act the following terms:

- a. Committee means the Nebraska Community College Student Performance and Occupational Educational Grant Committee;
- b. Community College Gap Assistance Program Act means the program created under section 29 of this act;
- c. Eligible program means a program offered by a community college that is non-credit bearing, is aligned with programs that lead to programs that award credit, associate's degree, diploma, or certificate in an in-demand occupation, is at least sixteen hours in duration and does either of the following:
 - i. Offers a national, state, or locally recognized certificate;
 - ii. Offers preparation for professional examinations or licensure;
 - iii. Provides an endorsement for an existing credential or license; and
 - iv. Represents recognized skill standards defined by an industrial sector.
- d. In-demand occupation means (list is not exhaustive):
 - i. Financial services;

- ii. Transportation, warehousing, and distribution logistics;
- iii. Precision metals manufacturing;
- iv. Biosciences;
- v. Renewable energy;
- vi. Agriculture and food processing;
- vii. Business management and administrative services;
- viii. Software and computer services;
- ix. Research, development, and engineering services;
- x. Health services;
- xi. Hospitality and tourism; and
- xii. Any other industry designated as an in-demand occupation by the committee.

Section 29 would create the Community College Gap Assistance program for the purpose of providing funding to community colleges so they can award assistance to students in eligible programs. An eligible applicant under the Community College Gap Assistance Program must:

- a. Have a family income at or below 250% of Office Management and Budget poverty guidelines; and
- b. Be a resident of Nebraska as provided under 85-502

Eligibility for Gap Assistance does not guarantee enrollment in a qualifying program.

Section 30 would provide that application for Gap Assistance be made to the community college in which the applicant is enrolled or intends to enroll, the application is valid for 6 months, and the applicant must provide all sources of income. An applicant cannot receive assistance under the program for more than one eligible program.

Section 31 would provide that applicants must demonstrate the ability to:

- a. Be accepted into and complete an eligible program;
- b. Be accepted into and complete a certificate, diploma or degree program for credit;
- c. Obtain a full-time job; and
- d. Maintain a full-time job over time.

The granting committee could award a grant up to the full amount of the eligible costs. Applications for a grant under this act would be denied if the community college receiving the application determines that funding is available for the applicant from another source.

Section 32 would provide that eligible cost under the act include but are not limited to:

- a. Tuition;
- b. Direct training costs;
- c. Required books and equipment; and
- d. Fees.

Section 33 would require each applicant to complete an initial assessment provided by the community college they will attend, to determine applicant's readiness for the eligible program for which they are seeking GAP assistance.

Section 34 would require recipients of assistance under this act to:

- a. Maintain regular contact with faculty of the eligible program to document the applicant's progress in the program;
- b. Sign any necessary releases to provide relevant information to community college faculty or case managers, if applicable;
- c. Discuss with faculty of the eligible program any issues that may affect the recipient's ability to complete the eligible program and obtain and maintain employment;
- d. Attend all required courses regularly; and
- e. Meet with faculty of the eligible program to develop a job search plan.

Community colleges would be allowed to terminate GAP Assistance to an applicant if they fail to meet the requirements of this section.

Section 35 would create the Community College Gap Assistance Program Fund, which could not exceed \$1.5 Million dollars during any fiscal year and which funds are to be used to create the application process, funding procedures and to defray community college costs attributed to the program. Community colleges would be able to receive the following percentage of funds:

- a. Up to 20% of any amount allocated for such purposes to the 2 smallest community colleges;
- b. Up to 10% of any such amount to the 2 largest community colleges; and
- c. Up to 15% of any such amount to the remaining two community colleges.

Section 36 would require the Nebraska Community College Student Performance and Occupational Educational Grant Committee to develop an applicant tracking system, coordinate statewide oversight and evaluation of the program and require the Committee to meet quarterly to evaluate and monitor the performance of the Gap Assistance Program to determine if measures are being met and if any changes to the program need to be made.

Section 37 would provide authority for the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education to adopt rules and regulations to carry out this act.

Section 26 would amend 85-1412 to include establishing the innovative grant program and administering the Community College Gap Assistance Program and the Community College Gap Assistance Program Fund in the duties of the Coordinating Commission.

Postsecondary Education Affordability

Section 39 would require that the Education Committee conduct a study of postsecondary education affordability and alternatives for supporting students and families with the cost. Recommendations would be due to the Clerk of the Legislature on or before December 31, 2015.

Kate Sullivan, Chairperson