

§ 115C-592. Award of scholarship funds for a personal education student account.

(a) Application Selection. – The Authority shall make available no later than February 1 of each year applications to eligible students for the award of scholarship funds for a personal education student account to be used for qualifying education expenses to attend a nonpublic school. Information about scholarship funds and the application process shall be made available on the Authority's website. Applications shall be submitted electronically. The Authority shall award scholarships according to the following criteria for applications received by March 1 of each year:

- (1) First priority shall be given to eligible students who were awarded scholarship funds for a PESA during the previous school year.
- (2) After funds have been awarded to prior recipients as provided in subdivision (1) of this subsection, any remaining funds shall be used to award scholarship funds for a PESA for all other eligible students.

(b) Scholarship Awards. – Except as provided in subsection (b1) of this section, scholarships shall be awarded each year for an amount not to exceed (i) nine thousand dollars (\$9,000) per eligible student for the school year for which the application is received or (ii) for eligible part-time students, four thousand five hundred dollars (\$4,500) per eligible student for the school year for which the application is received. Any funds remaining in an electronic account provided under subsection (b2) of this section at the end of a school year for eligible students who qualify only under this subsection shall be returned to the Authority.

(b1) Scholarship Awards for Students with Certain Disabilities. – A student who has one or more of the following disabilities listed as a primary or secondary disability on the student's eligibility determination form submitted as required by subsection (e) of this section at the time of application for scholarship funds may be awarded scholarship funds for each school year in an amount of up to (i) seventeen thousand dollars (\$17,000) for an eligible student or (ii) eight thousand five hundred dollars (\$8,500) for an eligible part-time student:

- (1) Autism.
- (2) Hearing impairment.
- (3) Moderate or severe intellectual disability.
- (4) Orthopedic impairment.
- (5) Visual impairment.

For eligible students who qualify for scholarship funds under this subsection, no more than four thousand five hundred dollars (\$4,500) of funds remaining in an electronic account at the end of a school year shall be carried forward until expended for each school year upon renewal of the account under subsection (b2) of this section. In no event shall the total amount of funds carried forward for an eligible student in a personal education student account exceed thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000). Any funds remaining in the electronic account if an agreement is not renewed under G.S. 115C-595 shall be returned to the Authority.

(b2) Disbursement and Deposit of Awards. – Scholarship funds shall be used only for tuition and qualifying education expenses as provided in G.S. 115C-595. Recipients shall receive the scholarship funds in two equal amounts, one-half in each semester of the school year. The first deposit of funds to a PESA shall be subject to the execution of the parental agreement required by G.S. 115C-595. The parent shall then receive an electronic account with the prepaid funds loaded in the electronic account at the beginning of the school year. Requests for qualifying educational expenses are subject to a preapproval process established by the Authority prior to the disbursement of funds from the electronic account. An expense report shall not be required for any expenses that have been preapproved by the Authority. The electronic account shall be renewed upon the receipt of the parental agreement under G.S. 115C-595 for recipients awarded scholarship funds in subsequent school years.

(c) Eligibility for Other Scholarship Programs. – An eligible student under this Article may receive, in addition to a PESA, a scholarship under Part 2A of Article 39 of this Chapter.

(d) Applications Not Public Records. – Applications for scholarship funds and personally identifiable information related to eligible students receiving funds shall not be a public record under Chapter 132 of the General Statutes. For the purposes of this section, personally identifiable information means any information directly related to a student or members of a student's household, including the name, birthdate, address, Social Security number, telephone number, e-mail address, or any other information or identification number that would provide information about a specific student or members of a specific student's household.

(e) Establishment of Initial Eligibility. – An applicant shall demonstrate for initial eligibility that the applicant is a child with a disability, as required by G.S. 115C-591(3)c., by having the child assessed by a local education agency and the local education agency determining the child to be a child with a disability with that outcome verified by the local education agency on an eligibility determination form provided to the Authority. (2017-57, s. 10A.4(a); 2018-2, s. 6(c); 2018-5, s. 10A.1(f); 2021-180, s. 8A.3(l); 2022-6, s. 2.14(a); 2022-74, s. 8A.6(a); 2023-134, s. 8A.11(a).)