

One Hundred Sixth Legislature - Second Session - 2020

Introducer's Statement of Intent

LB950

Chairperson: Senator Mike Groene

Committee: Education

Date of Hearing: January 27, 2020

The following constitutes the reasons for this bill and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby:

In 2014, the US Department of Agriculture created a new spending program called "Community Eligibility Provision," or CEP. CEP allowed a school to opt to give the entire school free lunch if at least 40% of the student population qualified for other forms of welfare assistance. As more and more schools adopt the CEP spending program, programs that are intended to help only those overcoming poverty become overloaded as entire schools become eligible for these program by qualifying for free lunches.

The ACE (Access College Early) scholarship is one such program. This program pays tuition and mandatory fees for qualified, low-income high school students to enroll in college courses from Nebraska colleges or universities, either through dual-enrollment or early enrollment agreements with these institutions.

Under the current statute §85-2104, a student qualifies for ACE if their parents or guardians receive:

- (a) Supplemental Security Income;
- (b) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits;
- (c) Free or reduced-price lunches under United States Department of Agriculture child nutrition programs;
- (d) Aid to families with dependent children; or
- (e) Assistance under the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children;

This bill modifies the qualifying standards for the ACE scholarship from the current qualifiers above to using FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) eligibility as the qualifier. Since FAFSA eligibility already requires the student demonstrate financial need, this standard appropriately adjusts the pool of students that would be eligible for the ACE scholarship, and maintains the intention of assisting those overcoming poverty. Additionally, this gives these high school students the opportunity to fill out a FAFSA well in advance of their college application, which acquaints them with the process of enrolling in higher education.

Principal Introducer: _____

Senator Dave Murman