

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 6255

To direct the Mayor of the District of Columbia to establish a District of Columbia National Guard Educational Assistance Program to encourage the enlistment and retention of persons in the District of Columbia National Guard by providing financial assistance to enable members of the National Guard of the District of Columbia to attend undergraduate, vocational, or technical courses.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 12, 2020

Ms. NORTON introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Reform

A BILL

To direct the Mayor of the District of Columbia to establish a District of Columbia National Guard Educational Assistance Program to encourage the enlistment and retention of persons in the District of Columbia National Guard by providing financial assistance to enable members of the National Guard of the District of Columbia to attend undergraduate, vocational, or technical courses.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA NATIONAL GUARD**
2 **EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

3 The Act entitled “An Act to provide for the organiza-
4 tion of the militia of the District of Columbia”, approved
5 March 1, 1889 (sec. 49–101 et seq., D.C. Official Code)
6 is amended by adding at the end the following new title:

7 **“TITLE II—EDUCATIONAL**
8 **ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

9 **“SEC. 201. SHORT TITLE; FINDINGS.**

10 “(a) SHORT TITLE.—This title may be cited as the
11 ‘Major General David F. Wherley, Jr. District of Colum-
12 bia National Guard Retention and College Access Act’.

13 “(b) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-
14 ings:

15 “(1) The District of Columbia National Guard
16 is under the exclusive jurisdiction of the President of
17 the United States as Commander-in-Chief and, un-
18 like other National Guards, is permanently federal-
19 ized.

20 “(2) The District of Columbia National Guard
21 is unique and differs from the National Guards of
22 the several States in that the District of Columbia
23 National Guard is responsible, not only for residents
24 of the District of Columbia, but also for a special
25 and unique mission and obligation as a result of the

1 extensive presence of the Federal Government in the
2 District of Columbia.

3 “(3) Consequently, the President of the United
4 States, rather than the chief executive of the Dis-
5 trict of Columbia, is in command of the District of
6 Columbia National Guard, and only the President
7 can call up the District of Columbia National Guard
8 even for local emergencies.

9 “(4) The District of Columbia National Guard
10 has been specifically trained to address the unique
11 emergencies that may occur regarding the presence
12 of the Federal Government in the District of Colum-
13 bia.

14 “(5) The great majority of the members of the
15 District of Columbia National Guard actually live in
16 Maryland or Virginia, rather than in the District of
17 Columbia.

18 “(6) The District of Columbia National Guard
19 has been experiencing a disproportionate decline in
20 force in comparison to the National Guards of Mary-
21 land and Virginia.

22 “(7) The States of Maryland and Virginia pro-
23 vide additional recruiting and retention incentives,
24 such as educational benefits, in order to maintain
25 their force, and their National Guards have drawn

1 recruits from the District of Columbia at a rate that
2 puts at risk the maintenance of the necessary force
3 levels for the District of Columbia National Guard.

4 “(8) Funds for an educational benefit for mem-
5 bers of the District of Columbia National Guard
6 would provide an incentive to help reverse the loss
7 of members to nearby National Guards and allow for
8 maintenance and increase of necessary District of
9 Columbia National Guard personnel.

10 “(9) The loss of members of the District of Co-
11 lumbia National Guard could adversely affect the
12 readiness of the District of Columbia National
13 Guard to respond in the event of a terrorist attack
14 on the capital of the United States.

15 **“SEC. 202. DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA NATIONAL GUARD EDU-**
16 **CATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

17 “(a) EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AUTHOR-
18 IZED.—The Mayor of the District of Columbia, in coordi-
19 nation with the commanding general of the District of Co-
20 lumbia National Guard, shall establish a program under
21 which the Mayor may provide financial assistance to an
22 eligible member of the District of Columbia National
23 Guard to assist the member in covering expenses incurred
24 by the member while enrolled in an approved institution
25 of higher education to pursue the member’s first under-

1 graduate, masters, doctoral, vocational, or technical de-
2 gree or certification.

3 “(b) ELIGIBILITY.—

4 “(1) CRITERIA.—A member of the District of
5 Columbia National Guard is eligible to receive assist-
6 ance under the program established under this title
7 if the commanding general of the District of Colum-
8 bia National Guard certifies to the Mayor the fol-
9 lowing:

10 “(A) The member has satisfactorily com-
11 pleted required initial active duty service.

12 “(B) The member has executed a written
13 agreement to serve in the District of Columbia
14 National Guard for a period of not less than 6
15 years.

16 “(C) The member is not receiving a Re-
17 serve Officer Training Corps scholarship.

18 “(2) MAINTENANCE OF ELIGIBILITY.—To con-
19 tinue to be eligible for financial assistance under the
20 program, a member of the District of Columbia Na-
21 tional Guard must—

22 “(A) be satisfactorily performing duty in
23 the District of Columbia National Guard in ac-
24 cordance with regulations of the National
25 Guard (as certified to the Mayor by the com-

1 manding general of the District of Columbia
2 National Guard);

3 “(B) be enrolled on a full-time or part-time
4 basis (seeking to earn at least 3, but less than
5 12 credit hours per semester) in an approved
6 institution of higher education; and

7 “(C) maintain satisfactory progress in the
8 course of study the member is pursuing, deter-
9 mined in accordance with section 484(c) of the
10 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
11 1091(c)).

12 **“SEC. 203. TREATMENT OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED.**

13 “(a) PERMITTED USE OF FUNDS.—Financial assist-
14 ance received by a member of the District of Columbia
15 National Guard under the program under this title may
16 be used to cover—

17 “(1) tuition and fees charged by an approved
18 institution of higher education involved;

19 “(2) the cost of books; and

20 “(3) laboratory expenses.

21 “(b) CAP ON AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE.—

22 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The amount of financial
23 assistance provided to a member of the District of
24 Columbia National Guard under the program may
25 not exceed the following:

1 “(A) In the case of fees and laboratory ex-
2 penses, \$500 per year.

3 “(B) In the case of books, \$500 per year.

4 “(C) In the case of tuition, \$10,000 per
5 year.

6 “(2) ADJUSTMENTS IN CASE OF INSUFFICIENT
7 FUNDING.—If the Mayor determines that the
8 amount available to provide assistance under this
9 title in any year will be insufficient, the Mayor may
10 reduce the maximum amounts of the assistance au-
11 thorized, or set a limit on the number of partici-
12 pants, to ensure that amounts expended do not ex-
13 ceed available amounts.

14 “(c) RELATION TO OTHER ASSISTANCE.—Except as
15 provided in section 202(b)(1)(C), a member of the District
16 of Columbia National Guard may receive financial assist-
17 ance under the program in addition to educational assist-
18 ance provided under any other provision of law.

19 “(d) REPAYMENT.—A member of the District of Co-
20 lumbia National Guard who receives assistance under the
21 program and who, voluntarily or because of misconduct,
22 fails to serve for the period covered by the agreement re-
23 quired by section 202(b)(1) or fails to comply with the
24 eligibility conditions specified in section 202(b)(2) shall be

1 subject to the repayment provisions of section 373 of title
2 37, United States Code.

3 **“SEC. 204. ADMINISTRATION AND FUNDING OF PROGRAM.**

4 “(a) ADMINISTRATION.—The Mayor, in coordination
5 with the commanding general of the District of Columbia
6 National Guard and in consultation with approved institu-
7 tions of higher education, shall develop policies and proce-
8 dures for the administration of the program under this
9 title. Nothing in this title shall be construed to require
10 an institution of higher education to alter the institution’s
11 admissions policies or standards in any manner to enable
12 a member of the District of Columbia National Guard to
13 enroll in the institution.

14 “(b) FUNDING SOURCES AND GIFTS.—

15 “(1) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

16 There are authorized to be appropriated to the Dis-
17 trict of Columbia such sums as may be necessary to
18 enable the Mayor to provide financial assistance
19 under the program. Funds appropriated pursuant to
20 this authorization of appropriations shall remain
21 available until expended.

22 “(2) TRANSFER OF FUNDS.—The Mayor may
23 accept the transfer of funds from Federal agencies
24 and use any funds so transferred for purposes of
25 providing assistance under the program. There is

1 authorized to be appropriated to the head of any ex-
2 ecutive branch agency such sums as may be nec-
3 essary to permit the transfer of funds to the Mayor
4 to provide financial assistance under this section.

5 “(3) DONATIONS.—The Mayor may accept, use,
6 and dispose of donations of services or property for
7 purposes of providing assistance under the program.

8 **“SEC. 205. DEFINITION.**

9 “In this title, the term ‘approved institution of higher
10 education’ means an institution of higher education (as
11 defined in section 102 of the Higher Education Act of
12 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002)) that—

13 “(1) is eligible to participate in the student fi-
14 nancial assistance programs under title IV of the
15 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070 et
16 seq.); and

17 “(2) has entered into an agreement with the
18 Mayor containing an assurance that funds made
19 available under this title are used to supplement and
20 not supplant other assistance that may be available
21 for members of the District of Columbia National
22 Guard.

23 **“SEC. 206. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

24 “Financial assistance may be provided under the pro-
25 gram under this title to eligible members of the District

1 of Columbia National Guard for periods of instruction
2 that begin on or after January 1, 2020.”.

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