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# Governor Christie Extends Promise of Higher Education Opportunity to Families with \$1 Million Governor's Urban Scholarship Program

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Funding to Provide Financial Assistance for the Brightest Students in New Jersey's Inner Cities and Urban Communities

**Trenton, NJ** – Acting on his commitment to help provide students in New Jersey's inner cities and urban communities the opportunity and resources they need to pursue higher educational opportunities they have earned, Governor Chris Christie today unveiled the \$1 million Governor's Urban Scholarship Program, first announced in the Fiscal Year 2013 Budget address. This new scholarship builds on Governor Christie's commitment to provide the resources necessary to expand access and opportunities for New Jersey students to pursue their education in college.

"We live in a time when educational attainment and economic success are correlated as never before. A quality education is the key to advancement and an improved livelihood, but the reality is that too many students are not given that choice, not because of a lack of ability but due to financial circumstances. Through the Governor's Urban Scholarship Program, we will be able to provide some of our brightest students from inner cities and urban communities with access to quality higher learning opportunities at our colleges and universities. I believe educating our most talented students is an investment in both our students and New Jersey's future. This program will provide another critical gateway for students to realize their full potential," Governor Chris Christie said.

The Governor's budget proposal provides more than \$393.2 million in funding for student financial assistance, the

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highest funding level in state history, including:

- Increasing Assistance For The Neediest Students By \$37.5 Million Through Tuition Aid Grants (TAG).
  - \$341.4 million in State funding is provided in total for Tuition Aid Grants, which will allow the average award in each sector to increase.
- Increasing Funding For The New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) For The First Time In Four Years.
  - More than \$38.8 million is provided for annual EOF grants ranging from \$200 to \$2,500 to the economically and educationally disadvantaged students who need it most.
- The Urban Scholarship Program continues the Christie Administration's strong commitment to one of the most generous need-based undergraduate aid programs in the country, including Tuition Aid Grants (TAG), NJ STARS/NJ STARS II and the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF).
  - Overall, Governor Christie's Fiscal Year 2013 Budget proposes an increase of over \$28 million above last year for student financial assistance, the bulk of which is a 10 percent increase in the funding for tuition aid grants.

The new student assistance program will prioritize assistance to those students in need by focusing on fourteen eligible areas identified by the Department of Education (DOE) and the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The program will provide a total commitment of up to \$1 million. Grant awards of \$1,000 each will be available for as many as 1,000 freshman students in the next academic year. And unlike similar programs in prior years, this program will be open to every high-achieving child in the identified high-need communities who demonstrates a financial need, no matter whether they attend a public or non-public school.

"The Governor's Urban Scholarship initiative can change lives by empowering students, and our hope is that by staying in our state, they will help rebuild and improve the communities where they live," said Acting Secretary of Higher Education Rochelle Hendricks.

To be eligible for the Governor's Urban Scholarship Program, students must:

- Be in the top 5 percent of their class and have at least a 3.0 grade point average;  
Reside in one of 14 high-need communities identified by DOE and DCA. These communities were selected based on a sharp, objective look at what communities had the greatest need, cross-referencing DOE priority schools and DCA's New Jersey Redevelopment Authority municipalities to find the communities who would benefit the most;
  - These 14 communities are: Asbury Park, Camden, East Orange, Irvington Township, Jersey City, Lakewood, Millville, Newark, New Brunswick, Trenton, Paterson, Plainfield, Roselle and Vineland.
- Attend a traditional public, public charter, county vo-tech or nonpublic school; and
- Be a resident for at least (12) consecutive months prior to graduation and upon college enrollment.

The Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA) will administer the program and high schools in the 14 high-need communities will be notified by HESAA that they are eligible to participate in the coming months. This program will be ready for 2012-13 and efforts are currently underway to ensure all technical aspects of this grant award are in place. Students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form and meet income

eligibility requirements under the Tuition Assistance Grant (TAG) program.

“The students who qualify for this program had a spark inside them and were determined to excel,” said Gabrielle Charette, Executive Director of the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority.

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