

## **Hope Scholarship Late Application Policy** **Adopted by Motion on August 9, 2023**

An injunction was placed on the Hope Scholarship Program in early July prior to the start of the 2022-2023 school year. The injunction created tremendous uncertainty for parents and families and administrative hurdles for the Hope Scholarship Board and Board staff. Additionally, because the Hope Scholarship Program was in its first year of implementation, many families were not aware of the program's existence. For all these reasons, the Hope Scholarship Board exercised a great deal of leniency toward late application requests. However, now that the Program's legal challenges have been resolved and the Program is in its second year of implementation, Board staff recommend that late applications only be accepted under the following circumstances:

1. A student becomes eligible for the Hope Scholarship by enrolling in a public elementary or secondary school program in this state for 45 calendar days during an instructional term pursuant to W.Va. Code §18-31-2(5)(B) and W.Va. CSR §112-18-3.1.4.c.
2. An incoming kindergarten student becomes eligible for kindergarten under a county board of education's early entrance process after the regular application deadline.
3. The parent/guardian obtains legal custody or legal placement of an eligible student after the regular application deadline.
4. *Documented* events of bullying, physical or sexual abuse, health and medical conditions, or significant accidents or injuries prevented the timely filing of an application.
5. *Documented* EMA malfunctioning, malfunctioning of Board-administered IT resources, or Board procedural errors prevented the timely filing of an application or caused a parent to reasonably rely on the awarded status of an application, and the student is otherwise eligible for the program according to the Hope Scholarship Act.
6. The student's public elementary or secondary school experiences an unexpected and extended closure, which occurs after the regular application deadline.

Board staff would ask the Board to authorize staff to process late applications only when one or more of the six categories of extenuating circumstances are present.

However, many of the late application requests that the Board staff receive do not fall under the previous criteria. Board staff would ask the Board to authorize staff to deny the filing of late applications when any of the following conditions arise:

1. The parent/guardian was not aware of the application deadline or decided to pursue alternative education after the application deadline.

2. Internet/IT issues (unrelated to EMA)

3. Relocation

All other late application inquiries will be brought to the Board for its consideration and the opportunity to provide direction to Board staff.