**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 59‑150‑385 SO AS TO ENACT THE “CALL ME OFFICER LAW ENFORCEMENT SCHOLARSHIP GRANTS PROGRAM” TO CREATE MORE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES BY USING THE UNIQUE VALUES OF PEOPLE FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS.

Whereas, the Call Me Mister scholarship program has demonstrated great success in providing opportunity for greater effectiveness in addressing the unique issues related to diversity posed in public education by increasing diversity in the teaching profession through scholarships and mentoring in order to foster a sense of inclusion rather than division in every community, and to enhance respect for law enforcement in divided communities; and

Whereas, in an effort to adapt and expand upon the successful principles employed in the Call Me Mister program in the realm of law enforcement, the General Assembly creates the Call Me Officer Law Enforcement Scholarship Grants Program to help provide a college education and the inherent opportunities for advancement associated with a college education, both to members of law enforcement who are uniquely capable of understanding and addressing the needs of minority citizens or who, through previous military service, are uniquely able to facilitate the reunification of divided communities and maintain solidarity in unified communities by representing the shared sense of national pride that brings Americans together despite other differences. Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. This act must be known and may be cited as the “Call Me Officer Law Enforcement Scholarship Grants Program”.

SECTION 2. Chapter 15, Title 59 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 59‑150‑385. (A)(1) The Commission on Higher Education, in consultation with the State Department of Public Safety, must develop a ‘Call Me Officer Law Enforcement Scholarship Grants Program’ to provide grants for the full cost of undergraduate tuition and fees to attend public or private colleges in this State to certified law enforcement officers in this State from underprivileged or economically disadvantaged backgrounds or areas who wish to pursue a college education in furtherance of their career in law enforcement.

(2) In exchange for receiving a scholarship made under this section, a scholarship recipient shall agree to serve as a law enforcement officer in a police or sheriff’s department in an underprivileged or economically disadvantaged city or county in this State for a period of five years following graduation with a bachelor’s degree.

(B)(1) A person seeking to receive a Call Me Officer Law Enforcement Scholarship Grant must be accepted to a college or university in this State before they are eligible to receive the grant, but may apply for the grant pending approval of their application for admission. An application for a grant must be made to the college or university at which the person is seeking admission, and must include:

(a) proof or receipt of a high school diploma and final transcript or General Educational Development (GED) certificate;

(b) two letters of recommendation, one of which must come from:

(i) a person of the student’s choice who can express the student’s involvement in the community and potential for serving and increasing diversity in the law enforcement profession; and

(ii) a teacher, guidance counselor, or principal at the high school from which the diploma is earned, if the student earned a high school diploma; provided, however, that if the person did not earn a high school diploma in this manner, he must submit a second application pursuant to subitem (a);

(c) an essay entitled, ‘Why I Want to have a Career in Law Enforcement’, which will address the student’s motivation for pursuing a career in the law enforcement profession and the contributions he hopes to make to serving the diverse needs of our State’s population through this career; and either

(d) a signed statement certifying that the student is from an underprivileged or economically disadvantaged background or area; or

(e) proof of having been honorably discharged from military service in the United States Armed Forces.

(2) Following the submission of the items above, the school shall conduct an interview with prospective program participants to ascertain their potential for serving in law enforcement and their motivations for participation in the program, as well as to provide an opportunity for clarification of any information submitted through the application process.

(C) If there are insufficient funds in the Education Lottery Account to provide the grant to each eligible recipient for a particular year, priority must be given to those law enforcement officers considered best able to promote diversity in law enforcement in underprivileged or economically disadvantaged areas of the State.”

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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