

# The Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance



## ***ACTION LETTER***

Action Letter #1  
October 2024

### **2025 MASSGrant Plus and MASSGrant Plus Expansion Programs Update**

Dear Colleague:

This Action Letter memorializes the authorizations that participating schools have in their administration of the MASSGrant Plus and the MASSGrant Plus Expansion programs in award year 2024-2025. The authorizations outlined in this Action Letter only apply to FY25 (Academic Year 2024-2025), unless extended, in writing, by the Commissioner's Office or otherwise embedded in programs guidelines in subsequent years.

#### **Guiding Principal Overview**

The Department of Higher Education seeks to provide greater student access to an equitable, high-quality and affordable system of higher education, as the Commonwealth strives to be a national leader in investments in need-based financial aid.

Through the MASSGrant Plus Expansion program, the Department of Higher Education (DHE) has prioritized financial assistance for full and part-time undergraduate students enrolled in approved programs at public two-year colleges or four-year universities and meet Pell Grant financial eligibility criteria. In addition, The MASSGrant Plus Expansion program assists other students from low- and middle-income families by supporting up to half of their tuition and fee costs, while simultaneously functioning as a last-dollar grant program, for those with an eligible Student Aid Index (SAI) of up to \$15,000, as indicated in the program guidelines.

Both last-dollar financial assistance programs supplement other non-loan aid to ensure that eligible students have sufficient resources to cover the cost of tuition and fees toward a certificate, associate, or bachelor's degree. The MASSGrant Plus program also provides eligible students with an allowance and support award for their educational books and supplies expenses, to further facilitate their persistence and degree completion.

#### **Authorizations**

This Action Letter serves to provide notification that the Commissioner of Higher Education is authorizing approval for institutions to assist students for tuition and fees as set forth below. If an institution has remaining funds, from their MASSGrant Plus or MASSGrant Plus Expansion allocations

after awarding all eligible enrolled students, as outlined in the program guidelines, institutions may cover educational expenses for other eligible students based on the following:

- As a priority, MASSGrant Plus funds must be awarded to Pell eligible students.
- MASSGrant Plus funds can be awarded to other low- and middle-income students, **ONLY** after those who are Pell eligible have been considered for and received assistance, as permitted under the program's guidelines.
- MASSGrant Plus Expansion is targeted for low and middle-income students who do not meet Pell Grant financial eligibility criteria.
- Students, such as undocumented students, who are unable to complete a FAFSA due to their immigration status, shall, consistent with the Massachusetts Tuition Equity Law, complete the state alternative financial aid application (the MASFA), and if they are determined to have an SAI that falls within the eligibility range for Pell, as calculated based on the MASFA, they shall receive assistance from the MASSGrant Plus program in parity with those who are eligible to file the FAFSA.
- MASSGrant Plus funds may be used to support students during the trailing summer term, if available, as permitted under the guidelines, and after all students who were eligible during the traditional terms (fall and spring) have been assisted.
- The Commissioner's discretionary expansion of MASSGrant Plus or MASSGrant Plus Expansion funds is limited to this fiscal year, academic year 2024-2025, unless expressly extended by the Commissioner in future fiscal years in writing. Students should be advised that any assistance they receive through the college or university's

exercise of these authorizations from the Commissioner's Office reflects a one-time availability of funds and will not be automatically available in future terms or award years.

### **Notice Regarding Budgeting for Students Retroactively Eligible Under the Tuition Equity Law**

This Action Letter further reaffirms the eligibility of currently enrolled, undocumented students who may seek assistance from state financial aid program, including the MASSGrant Plus and MASSGrant Plus Expansion programs, upon completion of the Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid (MASFA) and a determination of eligibility. Institutions are reminded of their responsibility to budget for and provide assistance to these students if they are eligible.

Institutions are invited to contact the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance by phone at (617) 391-6070, if they have any questions or need further clarification about the above update.

Thank you,

Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance  
(617) 391-6070