Harrisburg, PA – May 10, 2021) The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) announced today that Isaiah Skeete, a senior at Waynesburg University studying criminal justice, is the recipient of the PA State Grant Program’s $12 billionth award dollar.

The need-based PA State Grant Program has provided grant awards to nearly 3 million Pennsylvania students since the program was created by an act of the General Assembly in 1966.

“PHEAA’s PA State Grant Program has been incredibly beneficial to me in pursuing my goals”, said Isaiah Skeete, who is a resident of Reading, PA. “It afforded me the opportunity to attend the college of my choice with the best program for me and made it affordable. My family and I are so grateful, and I know that PHEAA has played an important role in helping me complete my Criminal Justice degree program."

“Isaiah represents generations of Pennsylvania college students who have been able to afford higher education with a PA State Grant Award,” said Representative Mike Peifer, PHEAA Board Chairman. “The program maximizes available Commonwealth and PHEAA funding annually to provide the most meaningful benefits to students with the greatest need, often making the difference between being able to afford college or not.”

Recent PHEAA research highlights how the PA State Grant Program plays a crucial role in decreasing student loan debt, with recipients who are Pell-eligible borrowing almost $9,000 less, on average, over 4 years. This is especially important in Pennsylvania, as 65 percent of college graduates carry some student loan debt, with an average debt load of more than $39,000 – the second highest in the nation.

With $310.7 million in Commonwealth funding and $30 million in federal CARES Act funding, combined with supplemental funding from PHEAA, the program is providing awards to approximately 120,000 students with a maximum award of $4,525 during the 2020-21 award year.
“PHEAA provides eligible students access and choice to the institution they desire to attend”, said Douglas G. Lee, President, Waynesburg University. “In my role as a University President, I have witnessed firsthand the profound affect this wonderful opportunity provides students across Pennsylvania. PHEAA is positively impacting many lives in our great state and I deeply appreciate their work.”

PHEAA has contributed more than $1 billion from its business earnings to supplement the PA State Grant and other student aid programs over the years, while covering all administrative costs, which saves Pennsylvania taxpayers nearly $15 million annually.

This makes Pennsylvania's student aid programs among the most efficient in the nation, since every dollar appropriated to those programs goes directly to benefit the students who need it most.

PHEAA's Board of Directors recently approved the 2021-22 PA State Grant Program awarding formula which will increase the maximum grant award by $154 to $4,679, provided that the General Assembly approves the Governor's recommended $309.7 million appropriation in the Commonwealth's 2021-22 State Budget.

To determine eligibility for a PA State Grant, students and their families must submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) and a PA State Grant Form (SGF) which can now be linked directly from the online FAFSA confirmation page. This link provides students with a one-stop-shop for applying for both federal and state financial aid.

For information on higher education financial aid process, schedules for upcoming financial aid nights and FAFSA Completion Sessions, reminders of financial aid deadlines, and video clips offering tips and information pertaining to planning for higher education, students can join PHEAA on Facebook at www.facebook.com/pheaa.aid. Students can also submit questions and open dialogue through the interactive discussion feature on the site.

Editor's Note: Attached Photo – Isaiah Skeete, Waynesburg University Student from Reading, PA

About PHEAA

Created in 1963 by the Pennsylvania General Assembly, the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) has evolved into one of the nation's leading student aid organizations. Today PHEAA is a national provider of student financial services, serving millions of students and thousands of schools through its loan guaranty, loan servicing, financial aid processing, outreach, and other student aid programs.

PHEAA's earnings are used to support its public service mission and to pay its operating costs, including administration of the PA State Grant and other state-funded student aid programs. As the only major federal loan servicer with a nonprofit public service mission, PHEAA devotes its energy and resources to help ease the financial burden of higher education for its primary stakeholders—Pennsylvania students and families.

PHEAA conducts its student loan servicing operations nationally as FedLoan Servicing and American Education Services (AES). PHEAA operates its digital technology division as Avereo.