

1 SB251
2 218008-1
3 By Senators Butler and Orr
4 RFD: Finance and Taxation Education
5 First Read: 23-FEB-22

SYNOPSIS: Under existing law, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education administers the Alabama Math and Science Teacher Education Program (AMSTEP) which provides student loan repayment for public high school math and science teachers who serve in underserved areas of the state.

This bill would increase the per semester loan repayment award for math and science teachers.

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

Relating to the Alabama Math and Science Teacher Education Program; to amend Sections 16-5-54 and 16-5-55, Code of Alabama 1975; to increase the per semester loan repayment award for qualified math and science teachers.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. Sections 16-5-54 and 16-5-55, Code of Alabama 1975, are amended to read as follows:

1 "§16-5-54.

2 "(a) To be eligible for the base program of ~~two~~
3 three thousand five seven hundred fifty dollars ~~(\$2,500)~~
4 (\$3,750) per semester for math and science teachers and one
5 thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) per semester for
6 computer science teachers, an applicant shall satisfy all of
7 the following:

8 "(1) Be a graduate of a State Board of Education
9 approved program in math, science, or computer science, at the
10 baccalaureate or master's level after the 2018 spring semester
11 term from an approved Alabama institution and hold an initial
12 middle level or secondary professional educator certificate
13 endorsed in math, science, or computer science that was issued
14 based upon completion of the approved program in math,
15 science, or computer science. A teacher who only earns a
16 passing score on the Praxis test in math, science, or computer
17 science to add a certificate endorsement for math, science, or
18 computer science, and who has not completed an entire approved
19 program, does not satisfy this requirement.

20 "(2) Holds a valid Alabama professional educator
21 certificate endorsed in middle level or secondary math,
22 science, or computer science, or any combination of the three.

23 "(3) Teaches a schedule in which at least
24 three-fourths of the full-time teaching load is comprised of
25 math, science, or computer science in an Alabama public school
26 system.

1 "(4) Is a citizen or a lawful permanent resident of
2 the United States.

3 "(5) Is a resident of Alabama and provides
4 documentation proving a permanent connection to the State of
5 Alabama. The commission shall accept any one of the following
6 as proof of residency:

7 "a. A current valid Alabama ~~driver's~~ driver license.

8 "b. A current valid Alabama vehicle registration.

9 "c. A current valid Alabama voter registration card.

10 "(6) Has outstanding federal student loans,
11 subsidized or unsubsidized.

12 "(7) Satisfies additional continuing eligibility
13 criteria established by the commission.

14 "(b) In order to receive an additional supplement
15 pursuant to this article, in addition to the criteria listed
16 in subsection (a), a recipient shall also teach math, science,
17 or computer science, or any combination of the three, in a
18 public school system within the state with an acute teacher
19 shortage in math, science, or computer science, or any
20 combination of the three, for which the teacher is properly
21 certified, as identified by the commission in consultation
22 with the Alabama State Department of Education or in a school
23 that has been designated as a failing school, or any other
24 term adopted to identify an underperforming school, by the
25 Alabama State Board of Education or the Legislature.

26 "§16-5-55.

1 "(a) The program shall be used to provide a loan
2 repayment for federal student loans in the following amounts:

3 "(1)a. Prior to the 2022 fall semester, Five five
4 thousand dollars (\$5,000) per year, or two thousand five
5 hundred dollars (\$2,500) per semester worked, for a maximum of
6 four consecutive years for a teacher with a valid Alabama
7 professional educator certificate endorsed in middle level or
8 secondary math or science who graduated from a teacher
9 education program at an approved institution after the 2018
10 spring semester term and is teaching in an Alabama public
11 school.

12 "b. Three thousand dollars (\$3,000) per year, or one
13 thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) per semester worked,
14 for a maximum of four consecutive years for a teacher with a
15 valid Alabama professional educator certificate endorsed in
16 computer science who graduated from a teacher education
17 program at an approved institution after the 2021 spring
18 semester term and is teaching in an Alabama public school.

19 "c. Beginning after the 2022 spring semester, seven
20 thousand five hundred dollars (\$7,500) per year, or three
21 thousand seven hundred fifty dollars (\$3,750) per semester
22 worked, for a maximum of four consecutive years for a teacher
23 with a valid Alabama professional educator certificate
24 endorsed in middle level or secondary math or science who
25 graduated from a teacher education program at an approved
26 institution after the 2018 spring semester term and is
27 teaching in an Alabama public school. Payments made under this

1 paragraph may only be made to eligible teachers who fulfilled
2 the per semester requirements for the 2022 fall semester and
3 forward.

4 "(2)a. An additional two thousand five hundred
5 dollars (\$2,500) per year, or one thousand two hundred fifty
6 dollars (\$1,250) per semester worked, for a maximum of four
7 consecutive years for a teacher who satisfies all criteria
8 listed in Sections 16-5-54, 16-5-54.1, and 16-5-54.2, and who
9 also is teaching math or science in a public school in a
10 school system within the state with an acute teacher shortage
11 in math or science, or both, as identified by the commission
12 in consultation with the Alabama State Department of Education
13 or in a school that has been designated as a failing school,
14 or any other term adopted to identify an underperforming
15 school by the Alabama State Board of Education or the
16 Legislature.

17 "b. An additional one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per
18 year, or five hundred dollars (\$500) per semester worked, for
19 a maximum of four consecutive years for a teacher who
20 satisfies all criteria listed in Sections 16-5-54, 16-5-54.1,
21 and 16-5-54.2, and who also is teaching computer science in a
22 public school in a school system within the state with an
23 acute teacher shortage in computer science as identified by
24 the commission in consultation with the Alabama State
25 Department of Education or in a school that has been
26 designated as a failing school, or any other term adopted to

1 identify an underperforming school, by the Alabama State Board
2 of Education or the Legislature.

3 "(b) Loan repayment award recipients shall reapply
4 for the program annually.

5 "(c) Loan repayment awards shall be distributed
6 directly to the recipient teacher in two disbursements during
7 the applicable year: One disbursement after January 1 and the
8 second disbursement after June 1. Each recipient shall provide
9 documentation from the employing school system as proof that
10 he or she has taught for a semester. If the award amount is
11 larger than the outstanding loan balance, the award amount
12 shall be reduced to the amount of the loan balance.

13 "(d) The requirements of this article are contingent
14 upon available funding for the program.

15 "(e) The commission shall determine the necessary
16 procedures for awarding loan repayments if the number of
17 eligible applicants and recipients exceeds available funding.

18 "(f) The recipient shall notify the commission in
19 writing of any change in status within 30 days after the
20 change. Failure to notify the commission of a change in status
21 shall affect future eligibility. All of the following
22 constitute a change in status:

23 "(1) A change in name.

24 "(2) A change in residence.

25 "(3) A change in employment status.

1 "(g) To receive a loan repayment check pursuant to
2 this article, a teacher shall register online with the state
3 Comptroller.

4 "(h) A loan repayment check is considered income by
5 the Internal Revenue Service, and recipients shall be made
6 aware of that fact.

7 "(i) Any funds appropriated to the program shall be
8 nonreverting.

9 "(j) Additional funds shall be made available to
10 teachers who also teach math, science, or computer science in
11 school systems of the state where the shortages of math,
12 science, or computer science teachers, or any combination of
13 the three, are most severe. The commission, in consultation
14 with the Alabama State Department of Education, shall
15 determine which school systems in the state have the greatest
16 shortage areas.

17 "(k) A recipient who receives a loan repayment award
18 and continues to satisfy employment criteria shall continue to
19 receive an award for the four-year limit regardless of whether
20 the employing school system retains its acute shortage
21 designation or the employing school is removed from the
22 failing school list. If a recipient leaves an acute shortage
23 system or a failing school and accepts employment in a school
24 system or school that does not hold an acute shortage system
25 or failing school designation, the recipient shall no longer
26 qualify to receive supplemental funds."

1 Section 2. This act shall become effective on the
2 first day of the third month following its passage and
3 approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.