

1 HB261
2 189494-1
3 By Representatives Lovvorn and Poole
4 RFD: Ways and Means Education
5 First Read: 18-JAN-18

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8 SYNOPSIS: Existing law does not provide a financial
9 incentive for teachers who earn certification in
10 mathematics or science and accept teaching
11 positions in those areas of the state with
12 shortages of math or science teachers, or both.

13 This bill would establish the Alabama Math
14 and Science Teacher Education Program, administered
15 through the Alabama Commission on Higher Education,
16 to provide loan repayment awards to eligible public
17 school teachers of math or science, or both, in
18 those areas of the state determined to have
19 qualified teacher shortages by the commission in
20 consultation with the State Department of
21 Education.

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23 A BILL
24 TO BE ENTITLED
25 AN ACT
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1 To establish the Alabama Math and Science Teacher
2 Education Program to provide loan repayment awards to eligible
3 public school teachers; to provide for administration by the
4 Alabama Commission on Higher Education; to provide eligibility
5 standards; and to provide for the determination of qualified
6 teacher shortage areas by the commission in consultation with
7 the State Department of Education.

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

9 Section 1. The purpose of the Alabama Math and
10 Science Teacher Education Program (AMSTEP) is twofold:

11 (1) To encourage individuals to enroll in and
12 complete programs leading to Alabama certification in
13 mathematics or science.

14 (2) To improve the educational system in Alabama by
15 encouraging those who complete the program to accept math or
16 science teaching positions in Alabama public schools,
17 preferably in public school systems where the shortage of math
18 or science teachers, or both, is most acute.

19 Section 2. For the purposes of this act, the
20 following terms shall have the following meanings:

21 (1) APPROVED INSTITUTION. A state-supported
22 institution of higher education or a private nonprofit
23 institution of higher education that satisfies all of the
24 following:

25 a. Is accredited by the Southern Association of
26 Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

1 b. Is approved by the State Board of Education or
2 the State Department of Education to prepare teachers of
3 secondary math or science, or both.

4 c. Is eligible to receive Title IV federal student
5 aid program funds.

6 d. Maintains its primary headquarters in Alabama.

7 (2) COMMISSION. The Alabama Commission on Higher
8 Education.

9 (3) ELIGIBLE APPLICANT. A person who satisfies the
10 criteria set out in this act and is found to be eligible by
11 rules adopted by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

12 (4) PROGRAM. The Alabama Math and Science Teacher
13 Education Program created by this act and administered by the
14 commission that provides loan repayments to a teacher with a
15 valid Alabama professional educator certificate endorsed in
16 math or science, who teaches math or science full-time in the
17 Alabama public school system.

18 (5) SCIENCE. Biology, chemistry, physics, and
19 general science.

20 (6) YEAR. A school year that shall be divided into
21 fall and spring semesters. The term does not mean calendar,
22 fiscal, or scholastic year.

23 Section 3. (a) The Alabama Math and Science Teacher
24 Education Program shall be administered by the commission,
25 which may adopt any rules necessary for the administration of
26 the program.

1 (b) The commission shall adopt standards for
2 awarding loan repayments to an Alabama public school teacher
3 who satisfies all of the following:

4 (1) Has graduated from an approved institution.

5 (2) Holds a valid Alabama professional educator
6 certificate endorsed in math or science.

7 (3) Is teaching in an Alabama public school
8 full-time in the field of math or science.

9 (4) May be eligible to receive additional funds for
10 teaching math or science in a public school in a geographic
11 area with acute teacher shortages in math or science, or both.

12 Section 4. (a) To be eligible for the base program
13 of two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) per semester, an
14 applicant shall satisfy all of the following:

15 (1) Be a graduate of a State Board of Education or
16 State Department of Education approved program in math or
17 science, at the baccalaureate or master's level, from an
18 approved institution leading to an initial secondary
19 professional educator certificate endorsed in math or science.
20 A teacher who only earns a passing score on the Praxis test in
21 math or science to add a certificate endorsement for math or
22 science, and who has not completed an entire approved program,
23 does not satisfy this requirement.

24 (2) Holds a valid Alabama professional educator
25 certificate endorsed in secondary math or science, or both.

26 (3) Teaches math or science full-time in an Alabama
27 public school district.

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

3 (5) Has been a resident of Alabama for at least 12
4 months before the application deadline and provides
5 documentation proving a permanent connection to the State of
6 Alabama. The commission shall accept any one of the following
7 as proof of residency:

8 a. A current valid Alabama driver's license.

9 b. A current valid Alabama vehicle registration.

10 c. A current valid Alabama voter registration card.

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

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

15 (b) In order to receive a supplement pursuant to
16 this act, in addition to the criteria listed above, a
17 recipient shall also teach math or science, or both, in a
18 geographic area within the state with an acute teacher
19 shortage in math or science, or both, as identified by the
20 commission in consultation with the State Department of
21 Education.

22 Section 5. (a) The program shall be used to provide
23 a loan repayment for federal student loans in the following
24 amounts:

25 (1) Five thousand dollars (\$5,000) per year, or two
26 thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) per semester worked,
27 for a maximum of four consecutive years for a teacher with a

1 valid Alabama professional educator certificate endorsed in
2 secondary math or science who graduated from a teacher
3 education program at an approved institution after the 2018
4 spring semester term and is teaching in an Alabama public
5 school.

6 (2) An additional two thousand five hundred dollars
7 (\$2,500) per year, or one thousand two hundred fifty dollars
8 (\$1,250) per semester worked, for a maximum of four
9 consecutive years for a teacher who satisfies all criteria
10 listed in subsection (a) of Section 4 and who also is teaching
11 math or science in a public school in an area of the state
12 with acute teacher shortages in math or science, or both, in a
13 geographic area within the state with an acute teacher
14 shortage in math or science, or both, as identified by the
15 commission in consultation with the State Department of
16 Education.

17 (b) Loan repayment award recipients shall reapply
18 for the program annually.

19 (c) Loan repayment awards shall be distributed
20 directly to the recipient teacher in two disbursements during
21 the applicable year: One disbursement after January 1 and the
22 second disbursement after June 1. Each recipient shall provide
23 documentation from the employing school district as proof that
24 he or she has taught for a semester. If the award amount is
25 larger than the outstanding loan balance, the award amount
26 shall be reduced to the amount of the loan balance.

1 (d) The requirements of this act are contingent upon
2 available funding for the program.

3 (e) The commission shall determine the necessary
4 procedures for awarding loan repayments if the number of
5 eligible applicants and recipients exceeds available funding.

6 (f) The recipient shall notify the commission in
7 writing of any change in status within 30 days after the
8 change. Failure to notify the commission of a change in status
9 shall affect future eligibility. All of the following
10 constitute a change in status:

11 (1) A change in name.

12 (2) A change in residence.

13 (3) A change in employment status.

14 (g) To receive a loan repayment check pursuant to
15 this act, a teacher shall register online with the
16 Comptroller.

17 (h) A loan repayment check is considered income by
18 the Internal Revenue Service, and recipients shall be made
19 aware of that fact.

20 (i) Any funds appropriated to the program shall be
21 nonreverting.

22 (j) Additional funds shall be made available to
23 teachers who also teach math or science in areas of the state
24 where the shortages of math or science teachers, or both, is
25 most severe. The commission, in consultation with the State
26 Department of Education, shall determine which school systems
27 in the state have the greatest shortage areas.

1 Section 6. 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.