

HB357 INTRODUCED



1 HB357
2 8XUYF2H-1
3 By Representatives Oliver, Robertson, Wood (R), Lipscomb,
4 Hurst, Gidley, Boyd, Butler, Shaver
5 RFD: State Government
6 First Read: 21-Mar-24



SYNOPSIS:

The Volunteer Rescue Squad Tuition Reimbursement Program pays tuition on behalf of students who are studying to qualify for emergency medical services personnel licensure from the Alabama Department of Public Health. In exchange for tuition, the students contract with the program to work for at least two years for an ambulance service, a volunteer rescue squad, or a volunteer fire department.

Current law authorizes the member schools of the Alabama Community College System, the Alabama Fire College, and the University of South Alabama to provide the necessary educational program to students and receive tuition reimbursement. This bill would add the Alabama Department of Public Health through its regional agencies of the Office of Emergency Medical Services to the group of participating educational institutions.

A BILL

TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

Relating to emergency medical services personnel



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education; to amend Sections 22-18-60, 22-18-61, and 22-18-64, Code of Alabama 1975, as amended by Act 2023-353, 2023 Regular Session; to amend Section 22-18-62, Code of Alabama 1975; to further provide for the Volunteer Rescue Squad Tuition Reimbursement Program by authorizing the Alabama Department of Public Health, through its designated regional agencies of the Office of Emergency Medical Services, to provide education and receive tuition reimbursement under the program.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. Sections 22-18-60, 22-18-61, and 22-18-64, Code of Alabama 1975, as amended by Act 2023-353, 2023 Regular Session, and Section 22-18-62, Code of Alabama 1975, are amended to read as follows:

"§22-18-60

For the purposes of this article, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

(1) ACCS. The Alabama Community College System.

(2) AMBULANCE SERVICE. An ambulance service located in this state which is a member of the Alabama Association of Ambulance Services.

(3) ASSOCIATIONS. The Alabama Association of Rescue Squads, the Alabama Association of Volunteer Fire Departments, or the Alabama Association of Ambulance Services.

(4) DESIGNATED EMS REGIONAL AGENCIES. The regional agencies of the Office of Emergency Medical Services of the Alabama Department of Public Health which are designated by the department to offer courses to students.

(5) ELIGIBLE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION. A member school



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of the ACCS, the fire college, the University of South
Alabama, or the designated regional EMS agencies.

~~(4)~~ (6) EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE PERSONNEL (EMSP). All
recognized levels of personnel licensed by the Alabama
Department of Public Health, who have met all primary or
renewal educational requirements, or both, set by the Alabama
Department of Public Health, and who are allowed to provide
medical care within the level of their scope of practice
granted by the Office of Emergency Medical Services within the
Alabama Department of Public Health.

~~(5)~~ (7) FIRE COLLEGE. The Alabama Fire College.

~~(6)~~ (8) STUDENT. A student enrolled in an emergency
medical services certification program at a member institution
of the ACCS, the fire college, or the University of South
Alabama, or an active volunteer in an ambulance service,
volunteer rescue squad, or volunteer fire department who is
studying towards EMSP certification by completing courses
offered by the designated EMS regional agencies.

~~(7)~~ (9) TUITION COSTS. Includes the actual cost of
tuition and fees required to complete an approved
~~course~~program of instruction for EMSP certification, as
determined by each eligible educational institution.

~~(8)~~ (10) VOLUNTEER RESCUE SQUAD. A volunteer rescue
squad located in this state ~~and~~that is a member of the Alabama
Association of Rescue Squads.

~~(9)~~ (11) VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT. A volunteer fire
department located in this state."

"§22-18-61



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(a) The ~~ACCS, the fire college, and the University of South Alabama~~eligible educational institutions, in consultation with the associations, shall jointly develop and administer a student tuition reimbursement program for students who contract to provide two years of emergency medical services for volunteer rescue squads, volunteer fire departments, or ambulance services after becoming a licensed EMSP.

(b) (1) Tuition reimbursement under this article shall cover tuition costs paid by the student or the volunteer rescue squad, volunteer fire department, ambulance service, or association on behalf of the student of which the student is a member. Tuition paid by the volunteer rescue squad, volunteer fire department, ambulance service, or association shall be reimbursed directly to the volunteer rescue squad, volunteer fire department, ambulance service, or association.

(2) Tuition reimbursement under this article shall not include any tuition costs covered by grants or other monetary awards provided to a student including, but not limited to, federal education grants and scholarships, as determined by the ACCS.

(3) Tuition costs shall not be reimbursed until the student provides ACCS and the associations with documentation that he or she has successfully completed the approved ~~course~~program of instruction, proof of passing the certification exam, production of a valid EMSP license from the Alabama Department of Public Health, and a contractual agreement to comply with the service requirements.



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(c) In the event that a tuition reimbursement recipient fails to meet the service requirements for any reason other than extreme hardship as defined within the joint agreement required in Section 22-18-64(b), the individual shall be deemed to have breached the underlying contract and shall be liable in the form of monetary damages to the state for the immediate repayment of the total tuition costs reimbursed, plus interest at the rate of eight percent. The associations shall notify ACCS of recipients who fail to meet the service requirements.

(d) Beginning with the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the amount of tuition reimbursement available to students shall be divided among volunteer fire departments, rescue squads, and ambulance services based on available appropriations. The ACCS shall create operational procedures to ensure that funds and volunteer service commitments are split equitably among volunteer fire departments, rescue squads, and ambulance services. Notwithstanding the foregoing, priority shall be given to volunteer fire departments, rescue squads, and nonprofit ambulance services.

"§22-18-62

~~Beginning October 1, 2018, the~~The member institutions of the ACCS, the Fire College, ~~and the~~ University of South Alabama, and the designated EMS regional agencies may enter into contracts with new students seeking to obtain certification as an EMSP."

"§22-18-64

(a) The ACCS shall annually report on the condition and



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141 accomplishments of the tuition reimbursement program to the
142 Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives, President
143 Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Chair of the House Ways and
144 Means Education Committee, the Chair of the Senate Finance and
145 Taxation Education Committee, and the Deputy Director of the
146 Legislative Services Agency, Fiscal Division. The report shall
147 include the number of students participating in the program
148 and the amount of tuition reimbursed for the reporting year.
149 The ~~member~~eligible educational institutions ~~of the ACCS, the~~
150 ~~fire college, and the University of South Alabama~~ shall
151 provide this information to ACCS for inclusion in the annual
152 report. The report shall be submitted by the fifth legislative
153 day of each regular session of the Legislature.

154 (b) The ACCS, ~~the fire college, and the University of~~
155 ~~South Alabama~~ shall enter into a joint agreement with the
156 other eligible educational institutions to implement and
157 administer the tuition reimbursement program, which shall
158 include provisions for ensuring that operational expenses for
159 the program in a fiscal year do not exceed 10 percent of the
160 funding for the program in that fiscal year. The joint
161 agreement shall provide for limiting the acceptance of
162 applications for the program or limiting tuition
163 reimbursements when necessary, or both.

164 (c) Any monies received for the operations of the
165 tuition reimbursement program, including repayments, interest,
166 and penalties paid because of failure to honor service
167 requirements, shall be used to fund tuition reimbursements."

168 Section 2. This act shall become effective on October



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169 1, 2024.