

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2001 SESSION

CHAPTER 660

An Act to amend and reenact § 23-38.10:1 of the Code of Virginia, to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 22.1-290.01, and to repeal § 22.1-212.2:1, relating to the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program.

[H 2589]

Approved March 25, 2001

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 23-38.10:1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 22.1-290.01 as follows:

§ 22.1-290.01. Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program established; purpose; Board of Education to administer Program; eligibility requirements for scholarship and awards; collaboration and consultation with State Council of Higher Education; repayment of scholarship required.

A. With such funds as may be appropriated for this purpose and any gifts, donations, grants, bequests, and other funds that may be received on behalf of the Program by the Board of Education, there is hereby established the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program, hereinafter referred to as the "Program," to: (i) increase the number of students pursuing careers in teaching; (ii) increase the number of teachers in the critical teacher shortage disciplines, including special education, as established by the Board; (iii) assist paraprofessionals enrolled as full-time or part-time students in an approved teacher education program in completing the program to become fully licensed teachers; (iv) expand eligibility to sophomores, and to students enrolled full-time or part-time in an approved teacher education program; and (v) increase the diversity of persons pursuing careers in teaching.

The Program shall consist of five components:

- 1. Awards to students pursuing teacher licensure;*
- 2. Awards to students pursuing teacher licensure in critical teacher shortage disciplines;*
- 3. Awards to assist paraprofessionals in completing an approved teacher education program to become fully licensed teachers;*
- 4. Awards to sophomores and full-time and part-time students enrolled in an approved teacher education program; and*
- 5. Awards to students of diverse backgrounds, pursuant to subsection B.*

B. In addition, there is hereby established within the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program a component focused solely on increasing diversity among teachers by providing incentives for students of diverse backgrounds to pursue careers in teaching, which shall be known as the Diversity in Teaching Initiative. The Diversity in Teaching Initiative shall provide scholarships to students of diverse backgrounds enrolled in approved undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs and shall be funded with such moneys as may be appropriated for this purpose, and any gifts, donations, grants, bequests, and other funds as may be received on its behalf by the Board of Education and deposited in the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Fund pursuant to subsection G. The Board shall establish procedures and criteria, in consultation with the Office of the Attorney General, for awarding the Diversity in Teaching Initiative scholarships.

C. The Board of Education shall establish, in regulation, criteria for determining, biennially, critical teacher shortage areas for awarding scholarships pursuant to this section. The criteria shall include such factors as the needs in teacher endorsement areas among the several school divisions of the Commonwealth, teacher shortages at the elementary and secondary grade levels, and teacher shortages in rural and urban regions of the Commonwealth. The Program shall be administered by the Board of Education, which shall promulgate such regulations as may be necessary for the implementation of the Program. The Board shall consult with the State Council of Higher Education in the development and implementation of the Program.

D. The Program shall consist of scholarships awarded annually to undergraduate students in the sophomore, junior, or senior year of college, and to graduate students at an accredited public or private four-year institution of higher education in the Commonwealth, who (i) are enrolled full-time or part-time in an approved teacher education program, or in a critical teacher shortage discipline, as may be determined by the Board of Education biennially; (ii) are employed as paraprofessionals and are enrolled full-time or part-time to complete an approved teacher education program to become fully licensed teachers; (iii) have and maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.7 on a 4.0 scale or its equivalent; and (iv) are nominated for such scholarship by the institution where they are enrolled.

Students enrolled in any area of an approved teacher education program who are seeking endorsements in elementary or middle education who meet the program requirements may be eligible for

such award.

E. Before any teaching scholarship is awarded in accordance with the provisions of this section, the scholarship recipient shall sign a promissory note under which he agrees (i) to pursue an approved teacher education or graduate education program full-time or part-time at an accredited public or private four-year institution of higher education in Virginia until his graduation and (ii) upon graduation, to begin teaching in the public schools of the Commonwealth in a critical teaching shortage discipline or, regardless of teaching discipline, in a school with a high concentration of students eligible for free or reduced lunch or in a rural or urban region of the Commonwealth with a teacher shortage.

Upon graduation, the scholarship recipient shall begin teaching in the public schools of the Commonwealth in the first full academic year after graduating from college and becoming eligible for a teaching license, and shall thereafter teach continuously in Virginia for the same number of years that he was the beneficiary of such scholarship. Such scholarship recipient may fulfill the teaching obligation by accepting a teaching position (i) in one of the critical teacher shortage disciplines as determined by the Board of Education; or (ii) regardless of teaching discipline, in a school with a high concentration of students eligible for free or reduced lunch; or (iii) at grade levels with a shortage of teachers; or (iv) in a rural or urban region of the state with a teacher shortage. The Board of Education may recover the total amount of funds awarded as a scholarship, or the appropriate proportion thereof, including any accrued interest, if the scholarship recipient fails to honor the teaching obligation.

F. To ensure a more diverse representation among classroom teachers, especially at the elementary and middle grade levels, the Diversity in Teaching Initiative shall consist of no more than five pilot projects, geographically distributed across the Commonwealth, and shall be designed to attract and encourage elementary and secondary school students, particularly students of diverse backgrounds, to pursue a career in teaching. The pilot projects shall be developed in accordance with the provisions of the appropriation act governing the administration of the Better Information Project within the Pre-Collegiate Program under the Virginia Plan for Equal Educational Opportunity in Higher Education. The pilot projects may include outreach activities such as mentorship programs, linkages between public schools and institutions of higher education, and other programs and activities designed to generate interest in the teaching profession. The Board shall require the evaluation of each pilot project before implementing this component of the Diversity in Teaching Initiative statewide.

G. There is hereby created in the Department of the Treasury a special nonreverting fund known as the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Fund, hereinafter referred to as the "Fund." The Fund shall be established on the books of the Comptroller, and any moneys remaining in the Fund at the end of the biennium shall not revert to the general fund but shall remain in the Fund. The Fund shall consist of such moneys as may be appropriated for the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program and such gifts, donations, grants, bequests, and other funds as may be received on its behalf by the Board of Education. The Fund shall be used solely to fund the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program. Interest earned on such moneys shall remain in the Fund and be credited to it. Moneys in the Fund shall be used solely to award scholarships pursuant to the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program as provided in this section. Disbursements from the Fund for such scholarships shall be made by the State Treasurer on warrants issued by the Comptroller upon written request of the President of the Board of Education. The State Treasurer shall ensure that any moneys appropriated or provided to the Fund for the Diversity in Teaching Initiative through appropriations, gifts, donations, grants, and bequests shall be accounted for separately and distributed only for scholarships awarded pursuant to the Diversity in Teaching Initiative.

H. The Board of Education and the State Council of Higher Education shall make available to parents, students, teachers, high school guidance counselors, and academic advisors and financial aid administrators at public and private institutions of higher education information concerning the Virginia Teacher Scholarship Loan Program, including the Diversity in Teaching Initiative, eligibility for the loans, and the terms and conditions under which such loans are awarded, in order that students interested in pursuing careers in the teaching profession may be advised of the availability of such financial assistance.

I. For the purposes of this section, "paraprofessional" means a full-time member of a school staff whose primary responsibility is to support instructional programs under the direction of licensed instructional personnel.

§ 23-38.10:1. Traineeships for education of special education personnel; collaboration and consultation with Board of Education in the development and implementation of the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program.

A. There are hereby established traineeships which shall be awarded to persons who are interested in working in programs for the education of handicapped children for either part-time or full-time study in programs designed to qualify them as special education personnel in the public schools. Applicants for such traineeships shall be graduates of a recognized college or university.

The award of such traineeships shall be made by the State Board of Education and the number of awards during any one year shall depend upon the amounts appropriated by the General Assembly for this purpose. The amount of each traineeship shall be \$450 for a minimum of six semester hours of

course work in areas relating to special education to be taken by the applicant during a single semester or summer session.

This program shall be administered by the State Department of Education under rules and regulations promulgated by the State Board of Education.

B. To increase the number of students pursuing careers in teaching and to ensure a more diverse representation among classroom teachers, particularly at the elementary and middle school grade levels, the State Council of Higher Education shall work collaboratively with the Board of Education in the development and implementation of the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program, pursuant to § 22.1-212.2:1. The Diversity in Teaching Initiative component of the Program shall be developed in accordance with the provisions of the appropriation act governing the administration of the Better Information Project within the Pre-Collegiate Program under the Virginia Plan for Equal Educational Opportunity in Higher Education, and shall be designed to attract and encourage elementary and secondary school students, particularly students of diverse backgrounds, to pursue careers in teaching. The pilot projects of the Diversity in Teaching Initiative may include outreach activities such as mentorship programs, linkages between public schools and institutions of higher education, and other programs and activities designed to generate interest in the teaching profession.

In addition, the State Council of Higher Education and the Board of Education shall make available to parents, students, teachers, high school guidance counselors, and academic advisors and financial aid administrators at public and private institutions of higher education information concerning the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program, including the Diversity in Teaching Initiative, eligibility for the loans, and the terms and conditions under which such loans are awarded, in order that students interested in pursuing careers in the teaching profession may be advised of the availability of such financial assistance.

2. That § 22.1-212.2:1 of the Code of Virginia is repealed.