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HOUSE BILL NO. 1165

Offered January 9, 2008

Prefiled January 9, 2008

A BILL to amend and reenact § 22.1-290.01 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program.

Patron—Saxman

Referred to Committee on Education

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 22.1-290.01 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted 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 teacher candidates pursuing careers in critical teacher shortage areas as defined in the Board of Education's Regulations Governing the Determination of Critical Teacher Shortage Areas; (ii) expand eligibility to teacher candidates, including graduate students and paraprofessionals from Virginia school divisions who are enrolled full-time or part-time in an approved teacher education program; ~~and~~ (iii) increase the diversity of persons pursuing careers in teaching, including male teacher candidates enrolled in an elementary or middle school education program and minority teacher candidates enrolled in any teaching endorsement area; *and (iv) increase the number of teacher candidates pursuing careers in the math or science disciplines.*

B. The Board of Education shall establish, in regulation, criteria for determining critical teacher shortage areas for awarding scholarships pursuant to this section. The criteria shall include such factors as the needs in teaching 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.

C. The Program shall be administered by the Board of Education. The Board may 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 implementation of the Program.

The Program shall consist of scholarships awarded annually to teacher candidates, including graduate students and paraprofessionals from Virginia school divisions 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 are participants in another approved teacher education program; (ii) have maintained a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.7 on a 4.0 scale or its equivalent; and (iii) are nominated for such scholarship by the institution where they are enrolled. In addition, the candidates must meet one or more of the following criteria: (a) be enrolled in a program leading to an endorsement in a critical shortage area as established by the Board of Education; (b) be a male teacher candidate in an elementary or middle school education program; ~~or~~ (c) be a minority teacher candidate enrolled in any teacher endorsement area; *or (d) be enrolled in a program leading to an endorsement in a math or science discipline.*

D. Before any teaching scholarship is awarded in accordance with the provisions of this section, the scholarship recipient shall sign a promissory note agreeing (i) to pursue an approved teacher education program full-time or part-time at an accredited public or private four-year institution of higher education in Virginia or another approved teacher education program and (ii) upon graduation, to begin teaching in the public schools of the Commonwealth in a critical teaching shortage discipline, *a math or science 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 program completion, the scholarship recipient shall begin teaching in the public schools of the Commonwealth in the first full academic year after becoming eligible for a teaching license, and shall fulfill the teaching obligation in accordance with the promissory note by teaching 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 established by the Board of Education; ~~or~~ (ii) *in a math or science discipline;* ~~(iii)~~ (iii) regardless of teaching discipline, in a school with a high concentration of students

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59 eligible for free or reduced lunch; ~~or (iii)~~(iv) in any discipline or at any grade level within a school
60 division with a shortage of teachers, as defined in the Board of Education's Regulations Governing the
61 Determination of Critical Teacher Shortage Areas; or ~~(iv)~~(v) in a rural or urban region of the state with
62 a teacher shortage.

63 E. The Board of Education may recover the total amount of funds awarded as a scholarship, or the
64 appropriate proportion thereof, including any accrued interest, if the scholarship recipient fails to honor
65 the teaching obligation.

66 F. There is hereby created in the Department of the Treasury a special nonreverting fund known as
67 the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Fund, hereinafter referred to as the "Fund." The Fund shall be
68 established on the books of the Comptroller, and any moneys remaining in the Fund at the end of the
69 biennium shall not revert to the general fund but shall remain in the Fund. The Fund shall consist of
70 such moneys as may be appropriated for the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program and such
71 gifts, donations, grants, bequests, and other funds as may be received on its behalf by the Board of
72 Education. The Fund shall be used solely to fund the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program.
73 Interest earned on such moneys shall remain in the Fund and be credited to it. Moneys in the Fund shall
74 be used solely to award scholarships pursuant to the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program as
75 provided in this section. Disbursements from the Fund for such scholarships shall be made by the State
76 Treasurer on warrants issued by the Comptroller upon written request of the President of the Board of
77 Education.

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