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SENATE BILL NO. 169

Offered January 9, 2008

Prefiled January 7, 2008

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

Patrons—Blevins and Ruff

Referred to Committee on Education and Health

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 career and technical education.

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:

1. ~~consist~~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; and

2. Award scholarships annually to students at the Virginia Community College System who (i) are enrolled full-time or part-time in a focused sequence of prerequisite courses for an approved teacher education program leading to an endorsement in career and technical education; (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.

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 or in a career and technical education 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

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59 Commonwealth in the first full academic year after becoming eligible for a teaching license, and shall
60 fulfill the teaching obligation in accordance with the promissory note by teaching continuously in
61 Virginia for the same number of years that he was the beneficiary of such scholarship. Such scholarship
62 recipient may fulfill the teaching obligation by accepting a teaching position (i) in one of the critical
63 teacher shortage disciplines as established by the Board of Education; or (ii) *in a career and technical*
64 *education discipline; or (iii)* regardless of teaching discipline, in a school with a high concentration of
65 students eligible for free or reduced lunch; or ~~(iii)~~(iv) in any discipline or at any grade level within a
66 school division with a shortage of teachers, as defined in the Board of Education's Regulations
67 Governing the Determination of Critical Teacher Shortage Areas; or ~~(iv)~~(v) in a rural or urban region of
68 the state with a teacher shortage.

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

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

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