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HOUSE BILL NO. 2607

Offered January 21, 1999

A BILL to amend and reenact § 22.1-212.2:1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program.

Patron—Christian

Referred to Committee on Education

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 22.1-212.2:1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 22.1-212.2:1. Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program established; purpose; Board of Education to administer Program; eligibility requirements for scholarship; collaboration and consultation with State Council of Higher Education; repayment of scholarship required.

A. From such funds as may be appropriated for this purpose and from such gifts, donations, and bequests as may be received on its behalf, With such funds as may be appropriated for this purpose, there is hereby established within the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program the Minorities in Teaching Program, hereinafter referred to as the "Program," to increase the number of minorities students pursuing careers in teaching, to assist paraprofessionals in the classroom in becoming fully licensed teachers, and to increase the number of minorities pursuing careers in teaching. The Program shall consist of three components: (i) awards to students pursuing teaching degrees in critical teacher shortage areas; (ii) awards to assist paraprofessionals in becoming fully licensed teachers; and (iii) awards to students eligible for the Minorities in Teaching Program, pursuant to subsection B.

B. There is hereby established within the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program, the Minorities in Teaching Program to increase the number of minorities pursuing careers in teaching. The Board of Education shall be authorized to receive any gifts, donations, or bequests on behalf of the Minorities in Teaching Program.

C. The Board of Education shall establish criteria for determining, biennially, critical teacher shortage areas for awarding scholarships pursuant to this section, which and establish criteria for defining "underserved area" and "moderate concentration" and "high concentration" of at-risk students, in accordance with the provisions in the appropriations act. The criteria shall include such factors as the needs in teacher endorsement areas and at the elementary and secondary grade levels, gender, ethnicity, under-served geographical regions of the Commonwealth, and school divisions with high concentrations of at-risk students. 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, before implementing the Program, document in writing the basis for any racial or gender preferences in any component of the Program, or in the regulations and policies governing such Program, and, upon making awards, that scholarships have been awarded in accordance with constitutional principles. The Board shall consult with the State Council of Higher Education in the development and implementation of the Program.

B D. The Board shall develop and implement the Program by July 1, 1997. The Program shall consist of scholarships awarded annually to undergraduate students in the junior or senior year of college at an accredited public or private four-year institution of higher education in the Commonwealth who (i) are enrolled full time in an approved teacher education program in a critical teacher shortage area, as may be determined by the Board of Education biennially, (ii) have and maintain 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. Minority students enrolled in any area of an approved teacher education program and male students enrolled in an approved teacher education program in elementary or middle school who meet the program requirements may be eligible for such award.

Paraprofessionals who are enrolled or accepted as a part-time or full-time undergraduate student in an accredited institution of higher education shall be eligible to compete for and receive such awards.

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 to pursue an approved teacher education program full time at an accredited public or private four-year institution of higher education in Virginia until his graduation. An eligible paraprofessional shall sign a promissory note under which he agrees to pursue an approved teacher education program either part-time or full-time. 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

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60 was the beneficiary of such scholarship. Such scholarship recipient may fulfill the teaching obligation by
61 accepting a teaching position in one of the critical teacher shortage areas determined by the Board of
62 Education, or in a school division with high concentrations of at-risk students, or at grade levels or in a
63 geographical region of the state where minority or male teachers are under-represented. The Board of
64 Education may recover the total amount of funds awarded as a scholarship, or the appropriate proportion
65 thereof, including any accrued interest, if the scholarship recipient fails to honor the teaching obligation.

66 D. To ensure a more diverse representation among classroom teachers, particularly at the elementary
67 grade level, the Program shall be designed to attract and encourage elementary and secondary school
68 students, particularly minority students, to pursue an approved teacher education program. The Program
69 shall be developed in accordance with the provisions of the appropriation act governing the
70 administration of the Pre-Collegiate Program. The Program may include outreach activities such as
71 student-teacher mentorship programs, linkages between public schools and institutions of higher
72 education, and other programs and activities designed to generate interest in the teaching profession. The
73 Board may provide for pilot programs before statewide implementation.