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HOUSE BILL NO. 472

Offered January 11, 2006

Prefiled January 9, 2006

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

Patrons—Cosgrove and Landes

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 students pursuing careers in teaching and students seeking endorsements in elementary and middle school education; (ii) increase the number of teachers in the critical teacher shortage disciplines, including special education, as established by the Board; (iii) increase the number of teachers in a school division with a shortage of teachers in any discipline or at any grade level, as defined in the Board of Education's Regulations Governing the Determination of Critical Teacher Shortage Areas; (iv) 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; (v) expand eligibility to sophomores, students enrolled full-time or part-time in an approved teacher education program; and (vi) increase the diversity of persons pursuing careers in teaching.

The Program shall consist of seven 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;
5. Awards to persons identified by a school board to teach in a discipline or at a grade level within the school division in which a shortage of teachers exists, as defined in the Board of Education's Regulations Governing the Determination of Critical Teacher Shortage Areas. However, such persons shall meet the qualifications for awards granted pursuant to this section;
6. Awards to students enrolled in any area of an approved teacher education program seeking endorsements in elementary or middle school education; and
7. 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 critical teacher shortage areas and disciplines 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.

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59 D. The Program shall consist of scholarships awarded annually to undergraduate students in the
60 sophomore, junior, or senior year of college, and to graduate students at an accredited public or private
61 four-year institution of higher education in the Commonwealth, who (i) are enrolled full-time or
62 part-time in an approved teacher education program, or in a critical teacher shortage discipline, as
63 established by the Board of Education; (ii) are enrolled in any area of an approved teacher education
64 program seeking endorsements in elementary or middle school education; (iii) are of diverse
65 backgrounds and enrolled in approved undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs, pursuant
66 to subsection B; (iv) are employed as paraprofessionals and are enrolled full-time or part-time to
67 complete an approved teacher education program to become fully licensed teachers; (v) has been
68 identified by a school board to teach in a discipline or at a grade level within the school division in
69 which a shortage of teachers exists, as defined in the Board of Education's Regulations Governing the
70 Determination of Critical Teacher Shortage Areas; (vi) have and maintain a cumulative grade point
71 average of at least 2.7 on a 4.0 scale or its equivalent; and (vii) are nominated for such scholarship by
72 the institution where they are enrolled.

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

81 Upon graduation, the scholarship recipient shall begin teaching in the public schools of the
82 Commonwealth *or in a private school in the Commonwealth in the area of special education* in the first
83 full academic year after graduating from college and becoming eligible for a teaching license, and shall
84 thereafter teach continuously in Virginia for the same number of years that he was the beneficiary of
85 such scholarship. Such scholarship recipient may fulfill the teaching obligation by accepting a teaching
86 position (i) in one of the critical teacher shortage disciplines as established by the Board of Education;
87 or (ii) regardless of teaching discipline, in a school with a high concentration of students eligible for
88 free or reduced lunch; or (iii) in any discipline or at any grade level within a school division with a
89 shortage of teachers, as defined in the Board of Education's Regulations Governing the Determination of
90 Critical Teacher Shortage Areas; or (iv) in a rural or urban region of the state with a teacher shortage;
91 *or (v) in a private school in the Commonwealth in the area of special education.* The Board of
92 Education may recover the total amount of funds awarded as a scholarship, or the appropriate proportion
93 thereof, including any accrued interest, if the scholarship recipient fails to honor the teaching obligation.

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

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

120 H. The Board of Education and the State Council of Higher Education shall make available to

121 parents, students, teachers, high school guidance counselors, and academic advisors and financial aid
122 administrators at public and private institutions of higher education information concerning the Virginia
123 Teacher Scholarship Loan Program, including the Diversity in Teaching Initiative, eligibility for the
124 loans, and the terms and conditions under which such loans are awarded, in order that students
125 interested in pursuing careers in the teaching profession may be advised of the availability of such
126 financial assistance.

127 I. For the purposes of this section, "critical teacher shortage area and discipline" means subject areas
128 and grade levels identified by the Board of Education in which the demand for classroom teachers
129 exceeds the supply of teachers, as defined in the Board of Education's Regulations Governing the
130 Determination of Critical Teacher Shortage Areas.

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