

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 1231 Session of  
2001

INTRODUCED BY D. EVANS, SATHER, COLAFELLA, THOMAS, BEBKO-JONES,  
BELARDI, BISHOP, BROWNE, CALTAGIRONE, CAPPABIANCA, COSTA,  
CRUZ, CURRY, DALEY, DeWEESE, DIVEN, FRANKEL, FREEMAN, GEORGE,  
GRUCELA, JAMES, JOSEPHS, KENNEY, LAUGHLIN, McILHATTAN, MELIO,  
ORIE, PETRONE, PIPPY, PISTELLA, READSHAW, ROSS, SOLOBAY,  
STABACK, STEELMAN, TANGRETTI, J. TAYLOR, TRAVAGLIO, TRELLO,  
TRICH, VEON, WALKO, WANSACZ, WATERS, WOJNAROSKI, YOUNGBLOOD  
AND YUDICHAK, MARCH 29, 2001

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, MARCH 29, 2001

AN ACT

1 Providing for Commonwealth support for a Specialty Teacher Loan  
2 Forgiveness Program for Pennsylvania residents who graduate  
3 from institutions of higher education and who apply their  
4 degrees to teaching certain subjects in urban and rural  
5 public schools in this Commonwealth and for Commonwealth  
6 support for a Professional Personnel Recruitment Initiative  
7 Program to provide grants to certain institutions of higher  
8 education; and making an appropriation.

9 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
10 hereby enacts as follows:

11 CHAPTER 1

12 GENERAL PROVISIONS

13 Section 101. Short title.

14 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Teach for  
15 Pennsylvania Program Act.

16 Section 102. Findings and declaration of intent.

17 The General Assembly finds and declares that:

18 (1) The number of college students planning to enter the

1 teaching profession in urban and rural areas appears to be  
2 inadequate to meet the need for specialty teachers in those  
3 public schools.

4 (2) Demand from industry and other opportunities attract  
5 existing and potential teachers away from specialty teaching  
6 positions in urban and rural public school districts of this  
7 Commonwealth.

8 (3) The pool of qualified specialty teachers, especially  
9 math, reading, computer science, science and special  
10 education, and principals has diminished.

11 (4) Economically hard-pressed urban and rural school  
12 districts find it difficult to attract qualified specialty  
13 teachers or principals from the diminished pool.

14 (5) Payment of a portion of student loans for certified  
15 specialty teachers serves the important public purpose of  
16 encouraging new teachers to teach in rural and urban areas of  
17 this Commonwealth.

18 Section 103. Definitions.

19 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall  
20 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the  
21 context clearly indicates otherwise:

22 "Agency." The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance  
23 Agency.

24 "Designated specialty teacher certification category." Any  
25 specialty category or subject area that a teacher is certified  
26 to teach in this Commonwealth and that is determined by the  
27 Secretary of Education under this act as a category or subject  
28 area with an insufficient number of teachers to meet the  
29 education needs of a designated urban or rural public school  
30 district. The secretary's determination of the specialty teacher

1 certification categories for each eligible urban or rural public  
2 school district shall be based on recommendations from the  
3 school district's superintendent regarding recruitment or  
4 personnel needs for specialty teachers or information from the  
5 Department of Education, organized by school district, which  
6 demonstrates any distribution of emergency, special temporary or  
7 special permanent teacher certificates for specialty category or  
8 subject areas.

9 "Designated urban or rural public school district." An  
10 eligible urban or rural public school district which the  
11 Secretary of Education has certified as having a need for  
12 teacher loan forgiveness assistance or teacher or principal  
13 recruitment because of difficulty in attracting specialty  
14 teachers or principals who are qualified.

15 "Eligible rural public school district." A public school  
16 district that has a population of less than 300 per square mile  
17 and either:

18 (1) more than 8% of the pupils in average daily  
19 membership are low-income pupils as defined in section  
20 2502.11 of the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known  
21 as the Public School Code of 1949; or

22 (2) the market value/income aid ratio as defined in  
23 section 2501 of the Public School Code of 1949 is greater  
24 than .7.

25 The term shall also apply to an intermediate unit or area  
26 vocational-technical school if the composite data for all  
27 participating school districts meet the criteria specified in  
28 Chapter 3.

29 "Eligible urban public school district." A public school  
30 district that has a population greater than 850 per square mile

1 and either:

2 (1) more than 8% of the pupils in average daily  
3 membership are low-income pupils as defined in section  
4 2502.11 of the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known  
5 as the Public School Code of 1949; or

6 (2) the market value/income aid ratio, as defined in  
7 section 2501 of the Public School Code of 1949, is greater  
8 than .7.

9 The term shall also apply to an intermediate unit or area  
10 vocational-technical school if the composite data for all  
11 participating school districts meet the criteria specified in  
12 Chapter 3.

13 "Program." The Specialty Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program  
14 created by Chapter 3.

15 "Qualified applicant." A person who meets all of the  
16 following criteria:

17 (1) Has graduated from an undergraduate or graduate  
18 college and completed a teacher education curriculum or  
19 program.

20 (2) Has achieved a minimum grade point average of 3.0 in  
21 the applicant's major area of study.

22 (3) Has completed the National Teaching Exam as  
23 administered by the Educational Testing Service and achieved  
24 a minimum score, as determined by the Secretary of Education,  
25 in the Core Battery Exams that relate to general knowledge,  
26 communications and professional knowledge and in any  
27 designated specialty teacher certification category or any  
28 combination of those categories.

29 (4) Holds a form of teacher certification to teach in  
30 the public schools of this Commonwealth, valid for the

1 subjects or grades in which the teacher is giving  
2 instruction.

3 (5) Is within the first five years of full-time teaching  
4 and:

5 (i) has achieved consecutive better-than-average  
6 teacher evaluation performance ratings; or

7 (ii) in the case of a teacher having worked more  
8 than five months but less than one year, has obtained a  
9 better-than-average new-hire probationary review.

10 (6) Is teaching in a designated specialty teacher  
11 certification category at a designated urban or rural public  
12 school district or at a nonprofit public school in such  
13 district at which students may fulfill compulsory attendance  
14 requirements.

15 (7) Has borrowed through the agency-administered Federal  
16 Stafford Loan Program.

17 (8) Commits to residing in the urban or rural public  
18 school district in which the applicant is teaching for a  
19 minimum period of five years.

## 20 CHAPTER 3

### 21 SPECIALTY TEACHER LOAN FORGIVENESS

22 Section 301. Specialty Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program.

23 (a) General rule.--Qualified applicants who are selected for  
24 the Specialty Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program in accordance  
25 with this chapter shall be eligible for payment by the agency of  
26 a portion of the debt incurred by the applicant through the  
27 agency-administered Federal Stafford Loan Program for the  
28 education necessary to be certified to teach in this  
29 Commonwealth. Subject to subsection (b), for each academic year  
30 that the qualified applicant is a full-time teacher in a

designated urban or rural public school district, the agency may  
forgive a part of the applicant's loan as follows:

(1) Year one, 5%.

(2) Year two, 10%.

(3) Year three, 20%.

(4) Year four, 25%.

(5) Year five, 40%.

(b) Amounts to be forgiven.--

(1) Where a qualified applicant has achieved a 3.51 to 4.0 grade point average on a scale of 4.0 or the equivalent for teaching certification in a designated specialty teacher certification category, no more than \$5,000 shall be forgiven in any year, and no more than \$25,000 shall be forgiven for the qualified applicant who satisfies the requirements of this chapter.

(2) Where a qualified applicant has achieved a 3.0 to 3.5 grade point average or a scale of 4.0 or the equivalent for teaching certification in a designated specialty teacher certification category, no more than \$2,500 shall be forgiven in any year, and no more than \$12,500 shall be forgiven for the qualified applicant who satisfies the requirements of this chapter.

(c) Designations.--The Secretary of Education shall designate specialty teacher certification categories and eligible urban and rural public school districts no later than January 1 of the year preceding the beginning of an academic year during which qualified applicants are eligible for loan forgiveness.

Section 302. Loan forgiveness awards.

A recipient for loan forgiveness shall be required to submit

1 such documentation of continued eligibility as the agency may  
2 require. A recipient who fails to maintain eligibility shall be  
3 removed from the program and shall repay, with interest, any  
4 loan forgiveness award made by the agency to the recipient  
5 during any period of ineligibility.

6 Section 303. Funding.

7 Loan forgiveness awards may be made to the extent that funds  
8 are appropriated by the General Assembly and are sufficient to  
9 cover the administration of the program. In the event that  
10 funding is insufficient to fully fund administration and all  
11 eligible applicants, the agency shall utilize a random lottery  
12 system for determining which applicants receive loan forgiveness  
13 awards.

14 Section 304. Responsibility of agency.

15 It shall be the responsibility of the agency to administer  
16 the Specialty Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program established by  
17 this chapter and to adopt such regulations, policies, procedures  
18 and forms as are necessary and consistent with the provisions of  
19 this chapter.

20 CHAPTER 5

21 PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL RECRUITMENT INITIATIVE

22 Section 501. Program authorization.

23 The Secretary of Education shall make awards to eligible  
24 applicants, on a competitive basis, for efforts that result in  
25 the recruitment of highly qualified teachers and principals.  
26 Recruitment efforts regarding highly qualified teachers shall be  
27 limited to individuals who will teach in a designated specialty  
28 teacher certification category. All recruitment efforts paid for  
29 by these funds shall be directed to providing teachers and  
30 principals who agree to both work and live in designated urban

1 or rural public school districts. Awards to eligible applicants  
2 shall be made for a five-year period and shall be subject to  
3 renewal without limit.

4 Section 502. Eligible applicant.

5 An eligible applicant shall be a Pennsylvania-based  
6 institution of higher education with an approved teacher  
7 education program and/or an approved certification program for  
8 elementary and secondary principals.

9 Section 503. Grant requirements.

10 To be eligible for a grant, an eligible applicant must submit  
11 a proposal containing the following:

12 (1) A narrative statement explaining how the proposal  
13 will result in meeting the goals of the program as described  
14 in section 501.

15 (2) A demonstration that the application was developed  
16 in association with participating designated urban or rural  
17 public school districts, teacher professional organizations  
18 and administrator professional organizations.

19 (3) An assessment of the need for teachers in a  
20 designated specialty teacher certification category or for  
21 principals to demonstrate that the participating designated  
22 urban or rural public school districts are underserved in  
23 either one or both categories of professional personnel.

24 (4) A plan demonstrating how potential teachers and  
25 principals will be recruited for participation in a program.  
26 The plan must assure that recruitment efforts will result in  
27 an increase in candidates above the average numbers prepared  
28 by the eligible applicant for the past five years. The plan  
29 must show what types of support will be given to candidates  
30 in areas such as, but not limited to, scholarships, academic

support and placement efforts. The plan must include a multiyear program of professional support for newly hired teachers and principals.

Section 504. Requirements for program participants.

(a) Teacher participants.--Program participants who are teachers must maintain a grade point average of 3.0 or higher. Such participants must complete the National Teaching Exam as administered by the Educational Testing Service and achieve a minimum score, as determined by the Secretary of Education, in the Core Battery Exams that relate to general knowledge, communications and professional knowledge and in any designated specialty teacher certification category or any combination of those categories. Such participants must agree to both teach in and reside in a participating designated urban or rural public school district for at least five years or repay all financial assistance. Participants must maintain a satisfactory job performance rating.

(b) Principal participants.--Program participants who are principals must meet all requirements of the Department of Education for certification as an elementary and/or secondary principal. Such participants must agree to both serve in and reside in a participating designated urban or rural public school district for at least five years or repay all financial assistance.

Section 505. Appropriation.

The sum of \$500,000, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated to the Department of Education for the fiscal year July 1, 2001, to June 30, 2002, for the support of the Professional Personnel Recruitment Initiative Program under Chapter 5. In subsequent fiscal years the Secretary of Education

1 shall request such sums as are deemed necessary to provide  
2 grants for the support of both continuing and new programs under  
3 Chapter 5.

4 CHAPTER 11

5 MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

6 Section 1101. Effective date.

7 This act shall take effect in 60 days.