

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 919 Session of
2007

INTRODUCED BY D. EVANS, ROEBUCK, BAKER, DePASQUALE, FREEMAN,
GALLOWAY, GRUCELA, JOSEPHS, W. KELLER, KING, KORTZ, LEACH,
McILHATTAN, MELIO, MURT, MYERS, M. O'BRIEN, PALLONE, PARKER,
PAYTON, PRESTON, READSHAW, SOLOBAY, STURLA, TANGRETTI,
THOMAS, WALKO AND YOUNGBLOOD, MARCH 29, 2007

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS, MARCH 29, 2007

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 appropriations.

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
19 teaching profession in urban and rural areas appears to be

1 inadequate to meet the need for specialty teachers in those
2 public schools.

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

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

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

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

17 Section 103. Definitions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(3) Has completed the National Teaching Exam as administered by the Educational Testing Service and achieved 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.

(4) Holds a form of teacher certification to teach in the public schools of this Commonwealth, valid for the subjects or grades in which the teacher is giving

1 instruction.

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 CHAPTER 3

20 SPECIALTY TEACHER LOAN FORGIVENESS

21 Section 301. Specialty Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program.

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

1 forgive a part of the applicant's loan as follows:

2 (1) Year one, 5%.

3 (2) Year two, 10%.

4 (3) Year three, 20%.

5 (4) Year four, 25%.

6 (5) Year five, 40%.

7 (b) Amounts to be forgiven.--

8 (1) Where a qualified applicant has achieved a 3.51 to
9 4.0 grade point average on a scale of 4.0 or the equivalent
10 for teaching certification in a designated specialty teacher
11 certification category, no more than \$5,000 shall be forgiven
12 in any year, and no more than \$25,000 shall be forgiven for
13 the qualified applicant who satisfies the requirements of
14 this chapter.

15 (2) Where a qualified applicant has achieved a 3.0 to
16 3.5 grade point average or a scale of 4.0 or the equivalent
17 for teaching certification in a designated specialty teacher
18 certification category, no more than \$2,500 shall be forgiven
19 in any year, and no more than \$12,500 shall be forgiven for
20 the qualified applicant who satisfies the requirements of
21 this chapter.

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

28 Section 302. Loan forgiveness awards.

29 A recipient for loan forgiveness shall be required to submit
30 such documentation of continued eligibility as the agency may

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

5 Section 303. Funding.

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

13 Section 304. Responsibility of agency.

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

19 CHAPTER 5

20 PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL RECRUITMENT INITIATIVE

21 Section 501. Program authorization.

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

1 shall be made for a five-year period and shall be subject to
2 renewal without limit.

3 Section 502. Eligible applicant.

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

8 Section 503. Grant requirements.

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 11

MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Section 1101. Appropriations.

(a) Agency.--The sum of \$1,000,000, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated to the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency for the fiscal year July 1, 2007, to June 30, 2008, for the support of the Specialty Teacher

1 Loan Forgiveness Program under Chapter 3.

2 (b) Department.--The sum of \$500,000, or as much thereof as
3 may be necessary, is hereby appropriated to the Department of
4 Education for the fiscal year July 1, 2007, to June 30, 2008,
5 for the support of the Professional Personnel Recruitment
6 Initiative Program under Chapter 5. In subsequent fiscal years
7 the Secretary of Education shall request such sums as are deemed
8 necessary to provide grants for the support of both continuing
9 and new programs under Chapter 5.

10 Section 1102. Effective date.

11 This act shall take effect in 60 days.