HB261

189494-2

By Representatives Lovvorn and Poole

RFD: Ways and Means Education

First Read: 18-JAN-18
HB261

ENROLLED, An Act,

To establish the Alabama Math and Science Teacher
Education Program to provide loan repayment awards to eligible
public school teachers; to provide for administration by the
Alabama Commission on Higher Education; to provide eligibility
standards; to provide for the determination of qualified
teacher shortage areas by the commission in consultation with
the State Department of Education; and to amend Section
16-5-12, Code of Alabama 1975, to provide that the evaluation
of the commission conducted every four years be based on a
survey of certain specified entities.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. The Alabama Math and Science Teacher
Education Program (AMSTEP) is created pursuant to Sections 2
to 6, inclusive, of this act.

Section 2. The purpose of the Alabama Math and
Science Teacher Education Program (AMSTEP) is twofold:

(1) To encourage individuals to enroll in and
complete programs leading to Alabama certification in
mathematics or science.

(2) To improve the educational system in Alabama by
encouraging those who complete the program to accept math or
science teaching positions in Alabama public schools,
preferably in public school systems where the shortage of math
or science teachers, or both, is most acute.

Section 3. For the purposes of Sections 2 to 6, inclusive, of this act, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

(1) APPROVED INSTITUTION. A state-supported institution of higher education or a private nonprofit institution of higher education that satisfies all of the following:
   a. Is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.
   b. Is approved by the State Board of Education or the State Department of Education to prepare teachers of secondary math or science, or both.
   c. Is eligible to receive Title IV federal student aid program funds.
   d. Maintains its primary headquarters in Alabama.

(2) COMMISSION. The Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

(3) ELIGIBLE APPLICANT. A person who satisfies the criteria set out in Sections 2 to 6, inclusive, of this act and is found to be eligible by rules adopted by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

(4) PROGRAM. The Alabama Math and Science Teacher Education Program created by Sections 2 to 6, inclusive, of
this act and administered by the commission that provides loan
repayments to a teacher with a valid Alabama professional
educator certificate endorsed in math or science, who teaches
math or science full-time in the Alabama public school system.
(5) SCIENCE. Biology, chemistry, physics, and
general science.
(6) YEAR. A school year that shall be divided into
fall and spring semesters. The term does not mean calendar,
fiscal, or scholastic year.

Section 4. (a) The Alabama Math and Science Teacher
Education Program shall be administered by the commission,
which may adopt any rules necessary for the administration of
the program.
(b) The commission shall adopt standards for
awarding loan repayments to an Alabama public school teacher
who satisfies all of the following:
(1) Has graduated from an approved institution.
(2) Holds a valid Alabama professional educator
certificate endorsed in math or science.
(3) Is teaching in an Alabama public school
full-time in the field of math or science.
(4) May be eligible to receive additional funds for
teaching math or science in a public school in a geographic
area with acute teacher shortages in math or science, or both.
Section 5. (a) To be eligible for the base program of two thousand five hundred dollars ($2,500) per semester, an applicant shall satisfy all of the following:

(1) Be a graduate of a State Board of Education or State Department of Education approved program in math or science, at the baccalaureate or master's level, from an approved institution leading to an initial secondary professional educator certificate endorsed in math or science. A teacher who only earns a passing score on the Praxis test in math or science to add a certificate endorsement for math or science, and who has not completed an entire approved program, does not satisfy this requirement.

(2) Holds a valid Alabama professional educator certificate endorsed in secondary math or science, or both.

(3) Teaches math or science full-time in an Alabama public school district.

(4) Is a citizen or a lawful permanent resident of the United States.

(5) Has been a resident of Alabama for at least 12 months before the application deadline and provides documentation proving a permanent connection to the State of Alabama. The commission shall accept any one of the following as proof of residency:

a. A current valid Alabama driver's license.

b. A current valid Alabama vehicle registration.
c. A current valid Alabama voter registration card.

(6) Has outstanding federal student loans, subsidized or unsubsidized.

(7) Satisfies additional continuing eligibility criteria established by the commission.

(b) In order to receive a supplement pursuant to Sections 2 to 6, inclusive, of this act, in addition to the criteria listed above, a recipient shall also teach math or science, or both, in a geographic area within the state with an acute teacher shortage in math or science, or both, as identified by the commission in consultation with the State Department of Education.

Section 6. (a) The program shall be used to provide a loan repayment for federal student loans in the following amounts:

(1) Five thousand dollars ($5,000) per year, or two thousand five hundred dollars ($2,500) per semester worked, for a maximum of four consecutive years for a teacher with a valid Alabama professional educator certificate endorsed in secondary math or science who graduated from a teacher education program at an approved institution after the 2018 spring semester term and is teaching in an Alabama public school.

(2) An additional two thousand five hundred dollars ($2,500) per year, or one thousand two hundred fifty dollars
($1,250) per semester worked, for a maximum of four consecutive years for a teacher who satisfies all criteria listed in subsection (a) of Section 4 and who also is teaching math or science in a public school in an area of the state with acute teacher shortages in math or science, or both, in a geographic area within the state with an acute teacher shortage in math or science, or both, as identified by the commission in consultation with the State Department of Education.

(b) Loan repayment award recipients shall reapply for the program annually.

(c) Loan repayment awards shall be distributed directly to the recipient teacher in two disbursements during the applicable year: One disbursement after January 1 and the second disbursement after June 1. Each recipient shall provide documentation from the employing school district as proof that he or she has taught for a semester. If the award amount is larger than the outstanding loan balance, the award amount shall be reduced to the amount of the loan balance.

(d) The requirements of Sections 2 to 6, inclusive, of this act are contingent upon available funding for the program.

(e) The commission shall determine the necessary procedures for awarding loan repayments if the number of eligible applicants and recipients exceeds available funding.
(f) The recipient shall notify the commission in writing of any change in status within 30 days after the change. Failure to notify the commission of a change in status shall affect future eligibility. All of the following constitute a change in status:

(1) A change in name.

(2) A change in residence.

(3) A change in employment status.

(g) To receive a loan repayment check pursuant to Sections 2 to 6, inclusive, of this act, a teacher shall register online with the Comptroller.

(h) A loan repayment check is considered income by the Internal Revenue Service, and recipients shall be made aware of that fact.

(i) Any funds appropriated to the program shall be nonreverting.

(j) Additional funds shall be made available to teachers who also teach math or science in areas of the state where the shortages of math or science teachers, or both, is most severe. The commission, in consultation with the State Department of Education, shall determine which school systems in the state have the greatest shortage areas.

Section 7. Section 16-5-12 of the Code of Alabama 1975, is amended to read as follows:

"§16-5-12."
"Two years after the establishment of the commission and during the last year of each gubernatorial term, the commission shall appoint a committee of at least three consultants who are not associated with higher education in this state conduct a survey of members of the education community, the Legislature, the Executive Branch of the state, and business and industry to evaluate the effectiveness of the work of the commission and to recommend changes as needed. A report prepared by the committee, detailing the results of the survey and any recommended changes, shall be submitted to the Governor, the Legislature, the presidents and governing boards of the public institutions of higher education of this state, and the public."

Section 8. This act shall become effective on the first day of the third month following its passage and approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.
Speaker of the House of Representatives

President and Presiding Officer of the Senate

I hereby certify that the within Act originated in and was passed by the House 27-FEB-18.

Jeff Woodard
Clerk

Senate 22-MAR-18
Amended and Passed

House 28-MAR-18
Concurred in Senate Amendment