S. B. No. 2040

MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION 2002

By: Senator(s) Chamberlin
To: Education; Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2040

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A TEACHER RETENTION SCHOLARSHIP GRANT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE THAT SCHOLARSHIPS SHALL BE AVAILABLE TO TEACHERS CURRENTLY EMPLOYED IN ANY SCHOOL DISTRICT IN THE STATE WORKING TOWARD A MASTER'S OR DOCTORATE OF EDUCATION DEGREE; TO PLACE SUBSEQUENT SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYMENT AS A CONDITION FOR RECEIPT OF THE SCHOLARSHIP; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. (1) There is established the Teacher Retention Grant Program within the State Department of Education. The purposes of the program shall be to retain the qualified teachers already serving as licensed teachers by making available scholarships to persons working towards a Master of Education degree, an Educational Specialist degree or a Doctor of Education degree at an institution of higher learning whose teacher education program is approved by the State Board of Education.

(2) Any institution of higher learning in the State of Mississippi which offers a Master of Education degree, an Educational Specialist degree or a Doctor of Education degree may apply to the department for participation in the program.

(3) The State Department of Education shall provide funds to participating institutions of higher learning for the purpose of awarding scholarships to licensed teachers currently employed by a school district in Mississippi and pursuing a Master of Education degree, an Educational Specialist degree or a Doctor of Education degree at such institutions while continuing to render service to the state as a licensed teacher in a school district located in the state. The financial scholarship shall be applied to the total cost for tuition, books, materials and fees at the institution in which the student is enrolled, not to exceed an...
amount equal to the highest total cost of tuition, books, materials and fees assessed by a state institution of higher learning during that school year.

(4) Students awarded financial scholarships under the Teacher Retention Grant Program may receive such awards for a maximum of four (4) school years; however, the maximum number of awards which may be made shall not exceed the length of time required to complete the number of academic hours necessary to obtain a Master of Education degree, an Educational Specialist degree or a Doctor of Education degree. Financial scholarships under the program shall not be based upon an applicant's eligibility for financial aid.

(5) Subject to the availability of funds, the State Board of Education may provide for professional development and support services as may be necessary for the retention of teachers participating in the program.

(6) Any person participating in the program who fails to complete a program of study that will enable that person to obtain a Master of Education degree, Educational Specialist degree or Doctor of Education degree shall become liable immediately to the State Board of Education for the sum of all awards made to that person under the program, plus interest accruing at the current Stafford Loan rate at the time the person abrogates his participation in the program.

(7) As a condition for participation in the program, a teacher shall agree to continued employment as a licensed teacher in a school district located in the state, for a period of not less than three (3) years which shall follow those years of service rendered while obtaining the Master of Education degree, Educational Specialist degree or Doctor of Education degree. However, for any person who obtained a baccalaureate degree in education with a financial scholarship under the Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship Program and who entered the Teacher Retention...
Grant Program before rendering service as a teacher, the period of
employment for the purposes of this subsection shall be two (2)
years, in addition to the employment commitment required under the
Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship Program. Service rendered by a
participant as a licensed teacher in a school district in this
state before that teacher becomes a participant in the program may
not be considered to fulfill the employment commitment required
under this subsection. Any person failing to comply with this
employment commitment in any required school year shall
immediately be in breach of contract and become liable immediately
to the State Department of Education for the sum of all
scholarships awarded to that person, less one-third (1/3) of the
amount of that sum for each year that service was rendered, or for
those persons whose required period of employment is two (2)
years, less one-half (1/2) of the amount of that sum for each year
that service was rendered, plus interest accruing at the current
Stafford Loan rate at the time the breach occurs, except in the
case of a deferral for cause by the State Board of Education when
there is no employment position immediately available upon the
teacher's obtaining of the Master of Education degree, Educational
Specialist degree or Doctor of Education degree. After the period
of such deferral, the person shall resume the required teaching
duties or shall become liable to the board under this subsection.
If a claim for repayment under this subsection is placed in the
hands of an attorney for collection after default, then the
obligor shall be liable for an additional amount equal to a
reasonable attorney's fee.

   (8) The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and
regulations necessary for the proper administration of the Teacher
Retention Grant Program.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from
and after July 1, 2002.