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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to student financial assistance; amending s. 1009.57, F.S.; requiring the Florida Teacher Scholarship and Forgivable Loan Program to provide scholarship assistance to education paraprofessionals and substitute teachers seeking certification to teach in critical teacher shortage areas; establishing a scholarship loan program to provide scholarship loans to students who teach in poor or underperforming areas in the state; providing eligibility requirements; providing for loan forgiveness; amending s. 1009.58, F.S.; expanding the critical teacher shortage tuition reimbursement program; authorizing tuition reimbursement for courses needed for recertification; authorizing certain tuition-free courses on a space-available basis; amending s. 1009.59, F.S.; specifying that the Critical Teacher Shortage Student Loan Forgiveness Program applies to personnel seeking employment in certain high priority location areas; increasing the amount of loan principal repayments; amending s. 1003.52, F.S.; conforming language; providing an appropriation; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Subsection (1) of section 1009.57, Florida Statutes, is amended, and subsection (4) is added to said section, to read:

1009.57 Florida Teacher Scholarship and Forgivable Loan Program.--



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30 (1) There is created the Florida Teacher Scholarship and
31 Forgivable Loan Program to be administered by the Department of
32 Education. The program shall provide scholarship assistance to
33 eligible students for lower-division undergraduate study and
34 loan assistance to eligible students for upper-division
35 undergraduate and graduate study. The program shall also provide
36 scholarship assistance for lower-division or upper-division
37 undergraduate study to education paraprofessionals and
38 substitute teachers to attain certification to teach in a
39 subject area or a high priority location area pursuant to s.
40 1009.59. The primary purpose of the program is to attract
41 capable and promising students to the teaching profession,
42 attract teachers to areas of projected or current critical
43 teacher shortage, attract liberal arts and science graduates to
44 teaching, and provide opportunity for persons making midcareer
45 decisions to enter the teaching profession. The State Board of
46 Education shall adopt rules necessary to administer the program
47 and shall annually identify critical teacher shortage areas.

48 (4) Within the Florida Teacher Scholarship and Forgivable
49 Loan Program is established a scholarship loan program to
50 provide 4-year scholarship loans of up to \$5,000 per year to
51 Florida high school seniors interested in preparing to teach in
52 the public schools of the state. The scholarship loan program
53 shall be administered by the Department of Education.

54 (a) To be eligible for a scholarship loan, a student must:

55 1. Have maintained a minimum cumulative grade point
56 average of 3.5 on a 4.0 scale or the equivalent in high school
57 and have scored at least 1100 on the SAT or 27 on the ACT.

58 2. Have declared the intent to teach for at least 3 years
59 in a public school in a poor or underperforming area identified



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60 by the department. For purposes of this subsection, the
61 department shall annually identify poor or underperforming areas
62 in the state.

63 3. Meet the general requirements for student eligibility
64 as provided in s. 1009.40, except as otherwise provided in this
65 subsection.

66 (b) A scholarship loan may be used for attendance at a
67 state university, a community college, or an independent
68 institution as defined in s. 1009.89. The scholarship loan shall
69 be used for tuition and fees and may be used to purchase books
70 and housing.

71 (c) A scholarship loan may be renewed annually if the
72 student meets the eligibility criteria established by the
73 department.

74 (d) All scholarship loans shall be evidenced by notes made
75 payable to the Department of Education that shall bear interest
76 at the rate of 8 percent annually beginning after termination of
77 the scholarship loan. The scholarship loan may be terminated by
78 the recipient withdrawing from school or by the recipient not
79 meeting the standards set by the department.

80 (e) The Department of Education shall forgive the loan if,
81 within 7 years after graduation, the recipient teaches for 3
82 consecutive years in a public school in a poor or
83 underperforming area. The department shall also forgive the loan
84 if it finds that it is impossible for the recipient to meet the
85 teaching requirements due to death or permanent disability of
86 the recipient.

87 (f) Funds appropriated by the Legislature for the
88 scholarship loan program shall be deposited in the State Student



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89 Financial Assistance Trust Fund to be used for scholarship
 90 loans.

91 Section 2. Section 1009.58, Florida Statutes, is amended
 92 to read:

93 1009.58 Critical teacher shortage tuition assistance and
 94 reimbursement program.--

95 (1) A critical teacher shortage tuition assistance and
 96 reimbursement program shall be established for the purpose of
 97 improving the skills and knowledge of current teachers or
 98 persons preparing to teach in critical teacher shortage areas.

99 (2) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to
 100 implement the critical teacher shortage tuition assistance and
 101 reimbursement program. Any full-time public school employee or
 102 developmental research school employee certified to teach in
 103 this state is eligible for the program. For the purposes of this
 104 program, tuition reimbursement shall be limited to courses in
 105 critical teacher shortage areas as determined by the State Board
 106 of Education. Such courses shall be:

107 (a) Graduate-level courses leading to a master's,
 108 specialist, or doctoral degree;

109 (b) Graduate-level courses leading to a new certification
 110 area; ~~or~~

111 (c) State-approved undergraduate courses leading to an
 112 advanced degree or new certification area; or ~~or~~

113 (d) Graduate-level courses or state-approved undergraduate
 114 courses leading to recertification.

115 (3) Participants may receive tuition reimbursement
 116 payments for up to 9 semester hours, or the equivalent in
 117 quarter hours, per year, at a rate not to exceed \$78 per
 118 semester hour, up to a total of 36 semester hours. All tuition



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119 reimbursements shall be contingent on passing an approved course
120 with a minimum grade of 3.0 or its equivalent.

121 (4) Participants may enroll in tuition-free courses on a
122 space-available basis at state universities when such courses
123 lead to certification in a new critical teacher shortage subject
124 area or to recertification by a teacher employed in a critical
125 teacher shortage area.

126 (5)(4) This section shall be implemented only to the
127 extent specifically funded and authorized by law.

128 Section 3. Subsections (1) and (2) of section 1009.59,
129 Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

130 1009.59 Critical Teacher Shortage Student Loan Forgiveness
131 Program.--

132 (1) The Critical Teacher Shortage Student Loan Forgiveness
133 Program is established to encourage qualified personnel to seek
134 employment in subject areas in which critical teacher shortages
135 exist and in high priority location areas in which at least 50
136 percent of the students receive free or reduced-price school
137 lunches, as identified annually by the State Board of Education.
138 The primary function of the program is to make repayments toward
139 loans received by students from federal programs or commercial
140 lending institutions for the support of postsecondary education
141 study. Repayments are intended to be made to qualified
142 applicants who begin teaching for the first time in designated
143 subject areas, and who apply during their first year of teaching
144 as certified teachers in these subject areas, and to qualified
145 applicants who begin teaching for the first time in a high
146 priority location area in which at least 50 percent of the
147 students receive free or reduced-price school lunches.



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148 (2) From the funds available, the Department of Education
149 may make loan principal repayments as follows:

150 (a) Up to \$5,000 ~~\$2,500~~ a year for up to 4 years on behalf
151 of selected graduates of state-approved undergraduate
152 postsecondary teacher preparation programs, persons certified to
153 teach pursuant to any applicable teacher certification
154 requirements, or selected teacher preparation graduates from any
155 state participating in the Interstate Agreement on the
156 Qualification of Educational Personnel.

157 (b) Up to \$7,500 ~~\$5,000~~ a year for up to 2 years on behalf
158 of selected graduates of state-approved graduate postsecondary
159 teacher preparation programs, persons with graduate degrees
160 certified to teach pursuant to any applicable teacher
161 certification requirements, or selected teacher preparation
162 graduates from any state participating in the Interstate
163 Agreement on the Qualification of Educational Personnel.

164 (c) All repayments shall be contingent on continued proof
165 of employment in the designated subject areas or high priority
166 location areas in this state and shall be made directly to the
167 holder of the loan. The state shall not bear responsibility for
168 the collection of any interest charges or other remaining
169 balance. In the event that designated critical teacher shortage
170 subject areas or high priority location areas are changed by the
171 State Board of Education, a teacher shall continue to be
172 eligible for loan forgiveness as long as he or she continues to
173 teach in the subject area or high priority location area for
174 which the original loan repayment was made and otherwise meets
175 all conditions of eligibility.

176 Section 4. Subsection (10) of section 1003.52, Florida
177 Statutes, is amended to read:



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178 1003.52 Educational services in Department of Juvenile
 179 Justice programs.--

180 (10) The district school board shall recruit and train
 181 teachers who are interested, qualified, or experienced in
 182 educating students in juvenile justice programs. Students in
 183 juvenile justice programs shall be provided a wide range of
 184 educational programs and opportunities including textbooks,
 185 technology, instructional support, and other resources available
 186 to students in public schools. Teachers assigned to educational
 187 programs in juvenile justice settings in which the district
 188 school board operates the educational program shall be selected
 189 by the district school board in consultation with the director
 190 of the juvenile justice facility. Educational programs in
 191 juvenile justice facilities shall have access to the substitute
 192 teacher pool utilized by the district school board. Full-time
 193 teachers working in juvenile justice schools, whether employed
 194 by a district school board or a provider, shall be eligible for
 195 the critical teacher shortage tuition assistance and
 196 reimbursement program as defined by s. 1009.58.

197 Section 5. There is hereby appropriated from the General
 198 Revenue Fund to the Department of Education the sum of \$12
 199 million to be divided evenly among the Florida Teacher
 200 Scholarship and Forgivable Loan Program, the critical teacher
 201 shortage tuition assistance and reimbursement program, and the
 202 Critical Teacher Shortage Student Loan Forgiveness Program for
 203 the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this act.

204 Section 6. This act shall take effect July 1, 2003.