

By Senator Wasserman Schultz

34-493-03

See HB

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to student financial  
3           assistance; amending s. 1009.57, F.S.;  
4           requiring the Florida Teacher Scholarship and  
5           Forgivable Loan Program to provide scholarship  
6           assistance to education paraprofessionals and  
7           substitute teachers seeking certification to  
8           teach in critical teacher shortage areas;  
9           establishing a scholarship loan program to  
10          provide scholarship loans to students who teach  
11          in poor or underperforming areas in the state;  
12          providing eligibility requirements; providing  
13          for loan forgiveness; amending s. 1009.58,  
14          F.S.; expanding the critical teacher shortage  
15          tuition reimbursement program; authorizing  
16          tuition reimbursement for courses needed for  
17          recertification; authorizing certain  
18          tuition-free courses on a space-available  
19          basis; amending s. 1009.59, F.S.; specifying  
20          that the Critical Teacher Shortage Student Loan  
21          Forgiveness Program applies to personnel  
22          seeking employment in certain high priority  
23          location areas; increasing the amount of loan  
24          principal repayments; amending s. 1003.52,  
25          F.S.; conforming provisions; providing an  
26          appropriation; providing an effective date.

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28 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:  
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1           Section 1. Subsection (1) of section 1009.57, Florida  
2 Statutes, is amended, and subsection (4) is added to that  
3 section, to read:

4           1009.57 Florida Teacher Scholarship and Forgivable  
5 Loan Program.--

6           (1) There is created the Florida Teacher Scholarship  
7 and Forgivable Loan Program to be administered by the  
8 Department of Education. The program shall provide scholarship  
9 assistance to eligible students for lower-division  
10 undergraduate study and loan assistance to eligible students  
11 for upper-division undergraduate and graduate study. The  
12 program shall also provide scholarship assistance for  
13 lower-division or upper-division undergraduate study to  
14 education paraprofessionals and substitute teachers to attain  
15 certification to teach in a subject area or a high priority  
16 location area pursuant to s. 1009.59.The primary purpose of  
17 the program is to attract capable and promising students to  
18 the teaching profession, attract teachers to areas of  
19 projected or current critical teacher shortage, attract  
20 liberal arts and science graduates to teaching, and provide  
21 opportunity for persons making midcareer decisions to enter  
22 the teaching profession. The State Board of Education shall  
23 adopt rules necessary to administer the program and shall  
24 annually identify critical teacher shortage areas.

25           (4) Within the Florida Teacher Scholarship and  
26 Forgivable Loan Program is established a scholarship loan  
27 program to provide 4-year scholarship loans of up to \$5,000  
28 per year to Florida high school seniors interested in  
29 preparing to teach in the public schools of the state. The  
30 scholarship loan program shall be administered by the  
31 Department of Education.

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

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

6           2. Have declared the intent to teach for at least 3  
7 years in a public school in a poor or underperforming area  
8 identified by the department. For purposes of this subsection,  
9 the department shall annually identify poor or underperforming  
10 areas in the state.

11           3. Meet the general requirements for student  
12 eligibility as provided in s. 1009.40, except as otherwise  
13 provided in this subsection.

14           (b) A scholarship loan may be used for attendance at a  
15 state university, a community college, or an independent  
16 institution as defined in s. 1009.89. The scholarship loan  
17 shall be used for tuition and fees and may be used to purchase  
18 books and housing.

19           (c) A scholarship loan may be renewed annually if the  
20 student meets the eligibility criteria established by the  
21 department.

22           (d) All scholarship loans shall be evidenced by notes  
23 made payable to the Department of Education that shall bear  
24 interest at the rate of 8 percent annually beginning after  
25 termination of the scholarship loan. The scholarship loan may  
26 be terminated by the recipient withdrawing from school or by  
27 the recipient not meeting the standards set by the department.

28           (e) The Department of Education shall forgive the loan  
29 if, within 7 years after graduation, the recipient teaches for  
30 3 consecutive years in a public school in a poor or  
31 underperforming area. The department shall also forgive the

1 loan if it finds that it is impossible for the recipient to  
2 meet the teaching requirements due to death or permanent  
3 disability of the recipient.

4 (f) Funds appropriated by the Legislature for the  
5 scholarship loan program shall be deposited in the State  
6 Student Financial Assistance Trust Fund to be used for  
7 scholarship loans.

8 Section 2. Section 1009.58, Florida Statutes, is  
9 amended to read:

10 1009.58 Critical teacher shortage tuition assistance  
11 and reimbursement program.--

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

16 (2) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to  
17 implement the critical teacher shortage tuition assistance and  
18 reimbursement program. Any full-time public school employee or  
19 developmental research school employee certified to teach in  
20 this state is eligible for the program. For the purposes of  
21 this program, tuition reimbursement shall be limited to  
22 courses in critical teacher shortage areas as determined by  
23 the State Board of Education. Such courses shall be:

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

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

28 (c) State-approved undergraduate courses leading to an  
29 advanced degree or new certification area; ~~or~~.

30 (d) Graduate-level courses or state-approved  
31 undergraduate courses leading to recertification.

1           (3) Participants may receive tuition reimbursement  
2 payments for up to 9 semester hours, or the equivalent in  
3 quarter hours, per year, at a rate not to exceed \$78 per  
4 semester hour, up to a total of 36 semester hours. All tuition  
5 reimbursements shall be contingent on passing an approved  
6 course with a minimum grade of 3.0 or its equivalent.

7           (4) Participants may enroll in tuition-free courses on  
8 a space-available basis at state universities when such  
9 courses lead to certification in a new critical teacher  
10 shortage subject area or to recertification by a teacher  
11 employed in a critical teacher shortage area.

12           ~~(5)(4)~~ This section shall be implemented only to the  
13 extent specifically funded and authorized by law.

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

16           1009.59 Critical Teacher Shortage Student Loan  
17 Forgiveness Program.--

18           (1) The Critical Teacher Shortage Student Loan  
19 Forgiveness Program is established to encourage qualified  
20 personnel to seek employment in subject areas in which  
21 critical teacher shortages exist and in high priority location  
22 areas in which at least 50 percent of the students receive  
23 free or reduced-price school lunches, as identified annually  
24 by the State Board of Education. The primary function of the  
25 program is to make repayments toward loans received by  
26 students from federal programs or commercial lending  
27 institutions for the support of postsecondary education study.  
28 Repayments are intended to be made to qualified applicants who  
29 begin teaching for the first time in designated subject areas,  
30 and who apply during their first year of teaching as certified  
31 teachers in these subject areas, and to qualified applicants

1 who begin teaching for the first time in a high priority  
2 location area in which at least 50 percent of the students  
3 receive free or reduced-price school lunches.

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

6 (a) Up to \$5,000~~\$2,500~~ a year for up to 4 years on  
7 behalf of selected graduates of state-approved undergraduate  
8 postsecondary teacher preparation programs, persons certified  
9 to teach pursuant to any applicable teacher certification  
10 requirements, or selected teacher preparation graduates from  
11 any state participating in the Interstate Agreement on the  
12 Qualification of Educational Personnel.

13 (b) Up to \$7,500~~\$5,000~~ a year for up to 2 years on  
14 behalf of selected graduates of state-approved graduate  
15 postsecondary teacher preparation programs, persons with  
16 graduate degrees certified to teach pursuant to any applicable  
17 teacher certification requirements, or selected teacher  
18 preparation graduates from any state participating in the  
19 Interstate Agreement on the Qualification of Educational  
20 Personnel.

21 (c) All repayments shall be contingent on continued  
22 proof of employment in the designated subject areas or high  
23 priority location areas in this state and shall be made  
24 directly to the holder of the loan. The state shall not bear  
25 responsibility for the collection of any interest charges or  
26 other remaining balance. In the event that designated critical  
27 teacher shortage subject areas or high priority location areas  
28 are changed by the State Board of Education, a teacher shall  
29 continue to be eligible for loan forgiveness as long as he or  
30 she continues to teach in the subject area or high priority  
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1 location area for which the original loan repayment was made  
2 and otherwise meets all conditions of eligibility.

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

5 1003.52 Educational services in Department of Juvenile  
6 Justice programs.--

7 (10) The district school board shall recruit and train  
8 teachers who are interested, qualified, or experienced in  
9 educating students in juvenile justice programs. Students in  
10 juvenile justice programs shall be provided a wide range of  
11 educational programs and opportunities including textbooks,  
12 technology, instructional support, and other resources  
13 available to students in public schools. Teachers assigned to  
14 educational programs in juvenile justice settings in which the  
15 district school board operates the educational program shall  
16 be selected by the district school board in consultation with  
17 the director of the juvenile justice facility. Educational  
18 programs in juvenile justice facilities shall have access to  
19 the substitute teacher pool utilized by the district school  
20 board. Full-time teachers working in juvenile justice schools,  
21 whether employed by a district school board or a provider,  
22 shall be eligible for the critical teacher shortage tuition  
23 assistance and reimbursement program as defined by s. 1009.58.

24 Section 5. There is hereby appropriated from the  
25 General Revenue Fund to the Department of Education the sum of  
26 \$8 million for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of  
27 this act.

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