

By Senator Harrell

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to the Growing Teachers from Within
3 Pilot Program; creating the pilot program within the
4 Department of Education, contingent upon legislative
5 appropriation; providing a purpose for the pilot
6 program; requiring school districts to apply to the
7 department by a specified date in order to participate
8 in the pilot program; requiring the Commissioner of
9 Education to select participating school districts
10 based on specified criteria to participate in the
11 pilot program; requiring the commissioner to
12 coordinate with certain state universities; specifying
13 eligibility requirements for participation by school
14 employees in the pilot program; requiring that funding
15 for the pilot program be used in a specified manner;
16 requiring participating school districts to submit a
17 report to the commissioner on an annual basis;
18 authorizing the State Board of Education to adopt
19 rules; providing for expiration; providing an
20 effective date.

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

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24 Section 1. Growing Teachers from Within Pilot Program.—
25 (1) Contingent upon legislative appropriation, the Growing
26 Teachers from Within Pilot Program is created within the
27 Department of Education. The purpose of the pilot program is to
28 assist school district employees who work in a public school but
29 are not employed as instructional personnel by removing barriers

31-01041A-23

2023794__

30 to their obtaining a teaching certificate in order to help
31 alleviate the growing teacher shortage throughout this state.

32 (2) In order to participate in the pilot program, school
33 districts must submit an application to the department by
34 October 1, 2023. The Commissioner of Education shall select up
35 to three school districts for participation in the pilot
36 program. The commissioner shall select one school district of a
37 county with a population less than 100,000 as of the most recent
38 decennial census, one school district of a county with a
39 population between 100,000 and 500,000 as of the most recent
40 decennial census, and one school district of a county with a
41 population exceeding 500,000 as of the most recent decennial
42 census. The commissioner shall coordinate with state
43 universities in proximity of the selected school districts to
44 assist in the department's administration of the pilot program.

45 (3) To be eligible to participate in the pilot program, an
46 employee of a participating school district must:

47 1. Be employed as an educational support employee or as an
48 education paraprofessional and have received an associate degree
49 or successfully completed 60 semester credit hours at a
50 postsecondary institution.

51 2. Commit to teach in the school district for a minimum of
52 2 years or a pro rata number of years after obtaining a teaching
53 certificate.

54 (4) Funds appropriated for the pilot program must be used
55 for all of the following:

56 (a) Establishing a customized coursework schedule to allow
57 for flexibility for participating school district employees to
58 complete credit hours toward earning a bachelor's degree while

31-01041A-23

2023794__

59 maintaining employment with the school district and ultimately
60 attaining a teacher certification.

61 (b) Financial support for tuition, credentials, technology,
62 and instructional materials for participating school district
63 employees.

64 (5) Participating school districts shall submit a report to
65 the Commissioner of Education by June 1 of each year for the
66 duration of the pilot program which includes, but is not limited
67 to, detailing findings regarding the pilot program's
68 implementation and whether it is meeting its intended goal of
69 servng as a recruitment tool and a strategy to retain school
70 district employees in order to alleviate the growing teacher
71 shortage in this state.

72 (6) The State Board of Education may adopt rules to
73 administer this section.

74 (7) This section expires June 30, 2026.

75 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2023.