

By Senator Mayfield

19-00315B-26

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A bill to be entitled
An act relating to engineering; amending s. 471.033, F.S.; providing penalties for persons found to have repeatedly engaged in the unlicensed practice of engineering; creating s. 471.056, F.S.; establishing the Engineering Student Loan Assistance Program; providing for the program's management by the Florida Engineers Management Corporation; providing the purpose of the program; providing eligibility requirements; providing the source of funding for the program; requiring that program funds be used only to pay certain costs; authorizing the management corporation to make payments; providing requirements for loan principal repayments; requiring the Board of Professional Engineers to adopt rules; providing construction; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Present subsection (4) of section 471.033, Florida Statutes, is redesignated as subsection (5), and a new subsection (4) is added to that section, to read:

471.033 Disciplinary proceedings.—

(4) Notwithstanding subsection (3), a person who violates this section by engaging in the unlicensed practice of engineering, upon a second or subsequent violation, is subject to a fine imposed by the department which increases as follows:

(a) For a second violation, a fine of \$10,000.

(b) For a third violation, a fine of \$15,000.

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(c) For a fourth violation, a fine of \$20,000.

(d) For a fifth and any subsequent violation, a fine of \$25,000.

Section 2. Section 471.056, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

471.056 Engineering Student Loan Assistance Program.—

(1) To encourage qualified candidates to seek employment in areas of this state in which critical engineering shortages exist, there is established the Engineering Student Loan Assistance Program. The Florida Engineers Management Corporation established in s. 471.038 shall manage the program. The primary purpose of the program is to increase employment and retention of licensed engineers who work for a state agency or water management district by making payments toward loans received by students from federal or state programs or commercial lending institutions for the support of postsecondary study in accredited or approved engineering programs.

(2) To be eligible for the program, a candidate must have graduated from an accredited or approved engineering program and have received a Florida license as a professional engineer or a professional engineer-in-training.

(3) Program funds are derived from the Professional Regulation Trust Fund. Such funds may be used only to pay the costs of tuition, books, and living expenses, at an amount not to exceed \$4,000 for each year of study toward the degree obtained.

(4) From the funds available, the management corporation may make loan principal repayments of up to \$4,000 a year for up to 4 years on behalf of selected graduates who meet the

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59 requirements of subsection (2), beginning after the selected
60 graduate's first year of employment. All repayments are
61 contingent upon continued proof of employment in a designated
62 state agency or water management district and must be made
63 directly to the holder of the loan. The state bears no
64 responsibility for the collection of any interest charges or
65 other remaining balance. In the event that the designated state
66 agencies or water management districts change, an engineer
67 remains eligible for loan assistance as long as he or she
68 remains employed in the state agency or water management
69 district for which the original loan payment was made and
70 continues to meet all other conditions of eligibility.

71 (5) The board shall adopt rules necessary to administer the
72 program.

73 (6) This section shall be implemented only as specifically
74 funded.

75 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.