

HOUSE BILL NO. 119

INTRODUCED BY S. BERGLEE

BY REQUEST OF THE SCHOOL FUNDING INTERIM COMMISSION

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT REVISING THE QUALITY EDUCATOR LOAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM; EMPHASIZING GEOGRAPHIC ISOLATION AS A FACTOR IN IDENTIFYING SCHOOLS IMPACTED BY CRITICAL QUALITY EDUCATOR SHORTAGES; MODIFYING THE ASSISTANCE ELIGIBILITY SCHEDULE; AND AMENDING SECTIONS 20-4-501, 20-4-503, 20-4-505, AND 20-4-506, MCA."

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

Section 1. Section 20-4-501, MCA, is amended to read:

"20-4-501. Quality educator loan assistance program -- purpose. (1) There is a quality educator loan assistance program administered by the board of regents through the office of the commissioner of higher education. The program must provide for the direct repayment of educational loans of eligible quality educators in accordance with policies and procedures adopted by the board of regents in accordance with this part.

(2) The purpose of this program is to aid quality educator recruitment and retention for those schools most impacted by critical quality educator shortages. The program must be implemented in a manner that maximizes recruitment and retention assistance to impacted schools."

Section 2. Section 20-4-503, MCA, is amended to read:

"20-4-503. Critical quality educator shortages. (1) The board of public education, in consultation with the office of public instruction, shall identify:

- (a) specific schools that are impacted by critical quality educator shortages; and
- (b) within the schools identified in subsection (1)(a), the specific quality educator licensure or endorsement areas that are impacted by critical quality educator shortages.

(2) In identifying impacted schools under subsection (1)(a), the board of public education, in consultation with the office of public instruction, shall consider including the following:

- (a) special education cooperatives;
- (b) the Montana school for the deaf and blind, as described in 20-8-101;

- 1 (c) the Montana youth challenge program, as established in 10-1-1401;
 2 (d) state youth correctional facilities, as defined in 41-5-103;
 3 (e) public schools that are located on an American Indian reservation; and
 4 (f) public schools that are located:
 5 (i) more than 45 minutes from a city with a population greater than 10,000 based on the most recent
 6 federal decennial census; or
 7 (ii) more than 30 minutes from a city with a population greater than 4,300 based on the most recent
 8 federal decennial census.

9 ~~(2)~~(3) The board of public education shall publish by December 1 an annual report listing the schools
 10 and the licensure or endorsement areas identified as impacted by critical quality educator shortages, explaining
 11 the reasons that specific schools and licensure or endorsement areas have been identified and providing
 12 information regarding any success in retention. The report must apply to the school year that begins July 1
 13 following the publication of the report in order to assist recruitment by impacted schools. For the school year
 14 beginning July 1, 2017, eligibility for the program may be governed by the report adopted by the board of public
 15 education by December 1, 2017.

16 ~~(3)~~(4) ~~Quality educators~~ A quality educator working at ~~schools~~ a school identified in subsection (1) ~~are~~
 17 is eligible for repayment of all or part of the quality educator's outstanding educational loans existing at the time
 18 of application in accordance with the eligibility and award criteria established under this part."
 19

20 **Section 3.** Section 20-4-505, MCA, is amended to read:

21 **"20-4-505. Loan repayment assistance documentation.** (1) A quality educator shall submit an
 22 application for loan repayment assistance to the board of regents in accordance with policies and procedures
 23 adopted by the board of regents. The application must include official verification or proof of the applicant's total
 24 unpaid accumulated educational loan debt and other documentation required by the board of regents that is
 25 necessary for verification of the applicant's eligibility.

26 ~~(2) A quality educator is eligible for loan repayment assistance for up to a maximum of 4 years. The total~~
 27 ~~annual loan repayment assistance for an eligible quality educator may not exceed \$3,000. The board of regents~~
 28 ~~may require an eligible~~ a quality educator who is eligible for loan repayment assistance to provide documentation
 29 that the quality educator has exhausted repayment assistance from other federal, state, or local loan forgiveness,
 30 discharge, or repayment incentive programs.

1 (3) A quality educator is eligible for loan repayment assistance for no more than 3 years, with the
 2 maximum annual loan repayment assistance not to exceed:

3 (a) \$3,000 after the first complete year of teaching in an impacted school;

4 (b) \$4,000 after the second complete year of teaching in the same impacted school or another impacted
 5 school within the same school district; and

6 (c) \$5,000 after the third complete year of teaching in the same impacted school or another impacted
 7 school within the same school district.

8 ~~(3)~~(4) The board of regents may remit payment of the loan on behalf of the quality educator in
 9 accordance with the requirements of this part and policies and procedures adopted by the board of regents."

10

11 **Section 4.** Section 20-4-506, MCA, is amended to read:

12 **"20-4-506. Funding -- priorities.** (1) If the funding for this part in any year is less than the total amount
 13 for which Montana quality educators qualify, the board of regents shall provide preference in the award of loan
 14 repayment assistance to quality educators working in the specific ~~schools~~ licensure or endorsement areas that
 15 are most impacted by quality educator shortages identified as provided in 20-4-503.

16 (2) If the funding for this part in any year is greater than the total amount for which Montana quality
 17 educators qualify, the board of public education shall consider expanding the number of impacted schools
 18 included in subsequent reports pursuant to 20-4-503.

19 ~~(2)~~(3) This part may not be construed to require the provision of loan repayment assistance without an
 20 express appropriation for that purpose. ~~This part may not be construed to require loan repayment assistance for~~
 21 ~~school years prior to July 1, 2007."~~

22

- END -