

136A.1791 TEACHER SHORTAGE LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAM.

Subdivision 1. **Definitions.** (a) The terms used in this section have the meanings given them in this subdivision.

(b) "Qualified educational loan" means a government, commercial, or foundation loan for actual costs paid for tuition and reasonable educational and living expenses related to a teacher's preparation or further education.

(c) "School district" means an independent school district, special school district, intermediate district, education district, special education cooperative, service cooperative, a cooperative center for vocational education, or a charter school located in Minnesota.

(d) "Teacher" means an individual holding a teaching license issued by the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board who is employed by a school district to provide classroom instruction.

(e) "Teacher shortage area" means:

(1) the licensure fields and economic development regions reported by the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board in coordination with the commissioner as experiencing a teacher shortage; and

(2) economic development regions where there is a shortage of licensed teachers who reflect the racial or ethnic diversity of students in the region as reported by the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board in coordination with the commissioner.

(f) "Commissioner" means the commissioner of the Office of Higher Education unless indicated otherwise.

Subd. 2. **Program established; administration.** The commissioner shall establish and administer a teacher shortage loan forgiveness program. A teacher is eligible for the program if the teacher is teaching in an identified teacher shortage area under subdivision 3 and complies with the requirements of this section.

Subd. 3. **Report on teacher shortage areas.** Using data collected for the teacher supply and demand report to the legislature under section 122A.091, subdivision 5, the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board shall identify the licensure fields and economic development regions in Minnesota experiencing a teacher shortage.

Subd. 4. **Application for loan forgiveness.** Each applicant for loan forgiveness, according to rules adopted by the commissioner, shall:

(1) apply for teacher shortage loan forgiveness and promptly submit any additional information required by the commissioner; and

(2) submit to the commissioner a completed affidavit, prescribed by the commissioner, affirming the teacher is teaching in: (i) a licensure field identified by the commissioner as experiencing a teacher shortage; or (ii) an economic development region identified by the commissioner as experiencing a teacher shortage.

Subd. 5. **Amount of loan forgiveness.** (a) To the extent funding is available, the annual amount of teacher shortage loan forgiveness for an approved applicant shall not exceed \$1,000 or the cumulative balance of the applicant's qualified educational loans, including principal and interest, whichever amount is less.

(b) Recipients must secure their own qualified educational loans. Teachers who graduate from an approved teacher preparation program or teachers who add a licensure field, consistent with the teacher shortage requirements of this section, are eligible to apply for the loan forgiveness program.

(c) No teacher shall receive more than five annual awards.

Subd. 6. **Disbursement.** (a) The commissioner must make annual disbursements directly to the participant of the amount for which a participant is eligible, for each year that a participant is eligible.

(b) Within 60 days of the disbursement date, the participant must provide the commissioner with verification that the full amount of loan repayment disbursement has been applied toward the designated loans. A participant that previously received funds under this section but has not provided the commissioner with such verification is not eligible to receive additional funds.

Subd. 7. **Penalties.** (a) A teacher who submits a false or misleading application or other false or misleading information to the commissioner may:

(1) have his or her teaching license suspended or revoked under section 122A.20;

(2) be disciplined by the teacher's employing school district; or

(3) be required by the commissioner to repay the total amount of the loan forgiveness he or she received under this program, plus interest at a rate established under section 270C.40.

(b) The commissioner must deposit any repayments received under paragraph (a) in the fund established in subdivision 8.

Subd. 8. **Account established.** A teacher shortage loan forgiveness repayment account is created in the special revenue fund for depositing money appropriated to or received by the commissioner for the program. Money deposited in the account is appropriated to the commissioner, does not cancel, and is continuously available for loan forgiveness under this section.

Subd. 9. **Annual reporting.** By February 1 of each year, the commissioner must report to the chairs of the kindergarten through grade 12 and higher education committees of the legislature on the number of individuals who received loan forgiveness under this section, the race or ethnicity of the teachers participating in the program, the licensure areas and economic development regions in which the teachers taught, the average amount paid to a teacher participating in the program, and other summary data identified by the commissioner as outcome indicators.

Subd. 10. **Rulemaking.** The commissioner shall adopt rules under chapter 14 to administer this section.

History: 2015 c 69 art 3 s 10; 2016 c 189 art 1 s 13-15; 1Sp2017 c 5 art 2 s 45-47; art 3 s 30; 2018 c 207 s 2; 2020 c 109 art 1 s 11,12