

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Education

BILL: SB 290

INTRODUCER: Senator Smith

SUBJECT: STEM Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program

DATE: January 21, 2016

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Bailey</u>	<u>Klebacha</u>	<u>ED</u>	Favorable
2.	<u>Sikes</u>	<u>Elwell</u>	<u>AED</u>	Pre-meeting
3.	_____	_____	<u>AP</u>	_____

I. Summary:

SB 290 creates a STEM Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program to encourage and incentivize qualified college graduates to remain in Florida and to teach a science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) course at a public school.

Specifically, the bill:

- Requires the Department of Education (DOE) to administer the program;
- Establishes eligibility criteria;
- Specifies that the program may only cover loans used to pay the cost of tuition, books, and living expenses;
- Authorizes DOE to make loan payments for up to \$16,000 for selected candidates, paid directly to holder of the loan;
- Requires proof of completion of program requirements;
- Authorizes the DOE to recover administrative costs from the program appropriation; and
- Authorizes the State Board of Education to adopt rules to administer the program.

Funding for the program is contingent upon a specific appropriation in the General Appropriations Act. According to the DOE, the total administrative cost of the program for the 2016-2017 fiscal year would be \$150,465. This includes \$79,200 to update the State Student Financial Aid Database with administrative capabilities and \$71,265 for one additional full-time position to administer the program.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2016.

II. Present Situation:

Florida does not currently have a state-administered teacher loan forgiveness program. However, two similar programs previously existed: the Critical Teacher Shortage Student Loan

Forgiveness Program¹ and the Critical Teacher Shortage Tuition Reimbursement Program.² In the 2009-2010 fiscal year, the final year of funding for these programs, the Critical Teacher Shortage Student Loan Forgiveness Program funded 4,215 applicants with an average undergraduate award of \$434 and an average graduate award of \$866.³ The Critical Teacher Shortage Tuition Reimbursement Program funded 505 applicants with an average award of \$103.⁴ In 2011, both programs were repealed due to lack of funding.⁵

STEM Education

The Department of Education (DOE) defines “STEM education” as the intentional integration of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, and their associated practices to create a student-centered learning environment in which students investigate and engineer solutions to problems, and construct evidence-based explanations of real-world phenomena with a focus on a student’s social, emotional, physical, and academic needs through shared contributions of schools, families, and community partners.⁶

During the 2014-15 fiscal year, 175,006 teachers were employed in 4,426 Florida public schools.⁷ Of this number, 47,342 teachers were teaching in a STEM area for eight or more years in a Florida public school district.⁸

The DOE’s 2015-2016 Course Directory lists courses by subject area, including science and mathematics. However, a STEM course is not specifically defined in the 2015-2016 Course Directory.⁹

Postsecondary Education Institutions

The Legislature recognizes that effective teachers make an important contribution to a system that allows students to obtain a high quality education.¹⁰

The State Board of Education is required to maintain a system for development and approval of teacher preparation programs to allow postsecondary teacher preparation institutions the ability to employ varied and innovative teacher preparation techniques while being held accountable for

¹ Section 1009.58 and Section 1009.59, F.S. (2010); Repealed by s. 10, Chapter 2011-37, L.O.F. Established in 1983 to encourage qualified personnel to seek employment in subject areas in which critical teacher shortages existed.

² S. 436, ch. 2002-387, L.O.F.; Repealed by s. 10, Chapter 2011-37, L.O.F. Established in 1983 to advance the skills and knowledge of current teachers or persons preparing to teach in critical teacher shortage areas.

³ Florida Department of Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance, *2009-10 Annual Report to the Commissioner*, available at <http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/SSFAD/pdf/annualreport09-10.pdf>

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Chapter 2011-37, L.O.F.

⁶ Department of Education, *STEM Programs*, <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/standards/subject-areas/math-science/stem/defining-stem.shtml> (last visited January 18, 2016).

⁷ Staff of the Department of Education, *2016 Legislative Bill Analysis for SB 290*, (on file with the Committee on Education Pre-K-12).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ Department of Education, *2015-2016 Course Directory*, <http://www.fldoe.org/policy/articulation/ccd/2015-2016-course-directory.shtml> (last visited January 19, 2016).

¹⁰ Section 1004.04, F.S.; Rule 6A-5.066, F.A.C.

producing program completers with the competencies and skills needed to achieve the state education goals.¹¹

Each state-approved teacher preparation program is required to follow uniform core curricula¹² requirements established by the State Board of Education.¹³ The programs must include the following:¹⁴

- Florida Educator Accomplished Practices;
- State-adopted content standards;
- Scientifically researched reading instruction;
- Content literacy and mathematics practices;
- Strategies appropriate for the instruction of English language learners;
- Strategies appropriate for the instruction of students with disabilities; and
- School safety.

Before program completion, each candidate must demonstrate his or her ability to positively impact student learning growth in the candidate's area or areas during field experience.¹⁵ The candidate must pass each portion of the Florida Teacher Certification Examination required for professional certificate in the area or areas of program concentration.¹⁶

Educator Preparation Institutes

An educator preparation institute is defined as an institute created by a postsecondary institution or a qualified private provider and approved by the DOE.¹⁷ A DOE-approved postsecondary institute provides:¹⁸

- Professional development instruction to assist teachers to improve classroom instruction and in meeting certification or recertification requirements;
- Instruction to assist potential and existing substitute teachers;
- Instruction to assist paraprofessionals in meeting education and training requirements; and
- Instruction for baccalaureate degree holders to become certified teachers in order to increase routes to the classroom for mid-career professionals who hold a baccalaureate degree and college graduates who were not education majors.

Florida Educator Certification

Florida educator certificates are issued by the Florida Department of Education as prescribed in statute.¹⁹ The Legislature has established certification requirements to assure that educational personnel in public schools possess appropriate skills in reading, writing, and mathematics, and

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Rule 6A-5.066, F.A.C. Uniform Core Curricula requires all state-approved teacher preparation programs to meet the standards contained in the Educator Accomplished Practices, Competencies and Skills for Teacher Certification, state content standards, and scientifically researched reading instruction appropriate to the candidate's teacher preparation program.

¹³ Section 1004.04(2), F.S.; Rule 6A-5.066, F.A.C.

¹⁴ Section 1004.04(2)(b), F.S.

¹⁵ Section 1004.04(2)(d), F.S.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ Section 1004.85, F.S.

¹⁸ Section 1004.85 (2), F.S.; Rule 6A-5.066, F.A.C.

¹⁹ Section 1012.56, F.S.

adequate pedagogical knowledge, including the use of technology to enhance student learning, and relevant subject matter competence so as to demonstrate an acceptable level of professional performance.²⁰ The established certificate renewal process promotes the continuing professional improvement of school personnel, thereby enhancing public education in all areas of the state.²¹

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

SB 290 creates a STEM Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program (program) to encourage and incentivize qualified college graduates to remain in Florida and to teach science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) at a public school.

Specifically, the bill requires a program candidate to be a graduate of a Florida public postsecondary education institution that offers 4-year degrees or teacher certifications. The bill specifies that the candidate must hold a valid Florida educator certificate issued by the Department of Education (DOE), which provides evidence that the educator is professionally qualified in order to protect the educational interests of students, parents, and the public at large.²²

The bill requires an eligible candidate to be employed by a school district and assigned to teach a STEM course at a public school in Florida for eight consecutive years. The purpose of the program is to incentivize STEM teachers to remain in Florida by making payments toward their student loans.

The DOE may make loan payments for up to \$16,000 for eligible teachers, paid directly to holder of the loan. However, it is unclear whether this is an annual limit or a total limit that eligible teachers may receive.

The bill requires the DOE to administer the program and authorizes DOE to recover administrative costs from funds appropriated for the program. The bill also authorizes the State Board of Education to adopt rules for administering the program.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2016.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

²⁰ Section 1012.54, F.S.

²¹ *Id.*

²² Rule 6A-4.001, F.A.C.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Teachers who meet the eligibility criteria may receive loan payments up to \$16,000. It is unclear whether this is an annual limit or a total limit that eligible teachers may receive.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Funding for the program is contingent upon a specific appropriation in the General Appropriations Act.

According to the DOE, the total administrative cost of the program for the 2016-2017 fiscal year would be \$150,465. This includes \$79,200 to update the State Student Financial Aid Database with administrative capabilities and \$71,265 for one additional full-time position to administer the program.²³

It is not known how many teachers may be eligible for this program.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill creates section 1009.641 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

²³ Staff of the Department of Education, *2016 Agency Bill Analysis SB 290*, (on file with the Committee on Education Pre-K-12).

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
