

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

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

BILL: SB 458

SPONSOR: Senator Miller

SUBJECT: Transition to Teaching Pilot Program

DATE: April 5, 2001 REVISED: 04/10/01 _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>White</u>	<u>O'Farrell</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Fav/1 amendment</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>AED</u>	_____
3.	_____	_____	<u>AP</u>	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

This bill creates a pilot program to encourage people to enter the teaching profession. To be eligible for the program, a participant must have a baccalaureate degree but not be certified to teach. A participant may receive a stipend of \$5,000 while completing the requirements for certification. If the recipient does not serve in a Florida school district for at least 3 years, the stipend must be repaid, at least in part.

This bill creates an undesignated section of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Need for Teachers

The Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research projects a need for a total of 162,296 new teachers in Florida between now and 2010. This year, 14,366 teachers are expected to resign or terminate their employment, and 1,081 additional teachers will be needed to accommodate growing student enrollments. Last year, almost 9 percent of Florida's teaching force needed to be replaced.

Florida's increasing student population, especially at the secondary school level, has increased the need for teachers. In Florida, 52 of the 67 school districts have increased their student population since 1995. Statewide, the student population has grown by more than 200,000 students. Student growth means that 11,400 additional teachers will be needed to accommodate higher enrollments.

Only about 6,000 teacher candidates graduate each year from state-approved teacher education programs.

Existing Programs

Florida has several programs designed to make available fellowships, forgivable loans, or tuition reimbursement for teachers who agree to teach in Florida's public schools for a number of years.

These include:

- Student fellowship program (s. 231.6215, F.S.), which if funded will provide annual forgivable loans of \$6500 to rising juniors who agree to teach in Florida for 3 years. Fellows must complete a major in a content area other than teaching and attain teaching expertise through a 12-month program designed by the university or college.
- Minority Teacher Education Scholars Program and the Florida Fund for Minority Teachers (ss. 240.4128 and 240.4129, F.S.)
- Critical Teacher Shortage Tuition Reimbursement Program (s. 240.4064, F.S.)
- Critical Teacher Shortage Student Loan Forgiveness Program (s. 231.621, F.S.)
- Florida Teacher Scholarship and Forgivable Loan Program (s. 240.4063, F.S.)
- Grants for teachers for special training in exceptional student education (s. 240.405, F.S.)

Troops to Teachers Program

The Troops to Teachers program is designed to help former military personnel enter public education as teachers. The federal government funds the program as a \$4 million grant program to school districts. Since the inception of the program in January 1994, 3,000 service members have entered the teaching profession. The program was created in the 1993 Defense Authorization Bill to ease the effect of military downsizing. It is managed by the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Support, called DANTES, a Department of Defense agency. Currently the program operates 20 state Placement Assistance offices, including one in Florida.¹ According to officials in the Department of Education, the program has recruited 270 new teachers for Florida's schools. The success of these programs is not so much in the numbers but in their ability to meet demographic or program needs. Almost all of the teachers are male, 29 percent are members of minority groups, and 66 percent are teaching mathematics or science. Eleven percent reported that they were teaching general special education.² A related program, called Soldiers to Scholars, provides scholarships to former military personnel who are completing their baccalaureate degrees and have agreed to enter the teaching profession. They live in high-poverty areas of Orlando while attending college, and most (73 percent) accept employment in inner-city schools. Currently 34 people are in this program.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The legislation under consideration creates the Transition to Teaching Program, to encourage people to enter the teaching profession. To be eligible for the program, a participant must have a baccalaureate degree but not be certified to teach. The commissioner may award a stipend of \$5,000 to each of 2,700 participants who are completing the requirements for certification. If a

¹C. Emily Feistritzer and others, *Profile of Troops to Teachers*, National Center for Education Information, 1998.

²*Ibid.*

recipient does not serve in a Florida school district for at least 3 years, the stipend must be repaid, at least in part.

The bill describes the program's purpose to address the need of Florida school districts for teachers.³ It suggests but does not limit the high-need subject areas for which a participant in the program may prepare to teach. In effect, a school district may employ a teacher from the program in any subject area and satisfy the requirements for repayment of the stipend. This provision responds to the fact that teacher shortages differ among the school districts. The commissioner will administer the program, receive the applications, and award the stipends to up to 2,700 participants. The commissioner will distribute the stipends as equitably as is practical among the geographic regions.

To be eligible, a participant must be a professional who:

- Holds at least a baccalaureate degree and will earn a teaching certificate within a maximum of 15 college credit hours.
- Demonstrates a commitment to becoming a teacher.
- Has knowledge and experience relevant to teaching.
- Has a commitment for hire in writing from a school district. (*Note: Amendment 1 by Education deleted this requirement.*)

The participant must agree in writing to serve in a school district for at least 3 years and to become fully certified within 2 years after employment. The commissioner will require the participants to repay the stipend at least in part if the service obligation is not fulfilled.

The district school boards that employ the participants will supply information to enable the commissioner to evaluate the program's effectiveness, and the commissioner will supply the information to the President of the Florida Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The bill authorizes the State Board of Education to adopt rules to administer the program.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2001.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

³ Throughout the bill, the term "high-poverty school district" is used to describe eligibility for the program. In Florida, each of the 67 school districts meets the definition of "high-poverty" provided in the bill.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Up to 2,700 people may be eligible for grants of up to \$5,000 each to assist them prepare to become certified teachers.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill appropriates \$13.5 million in 2001-2002 for the program.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

The terms “high-poverty school district” and “high-need subject area” might be misleading, since the bill provides definitions that do not exclude any school district or subject area.

VII. Related Issues:

The bill requires a participant to get a commitment for employment from a school district. The commitment must be in writing. According to staff of the department, the legality of such a paper will be unclear and school districts might be unwilling to provide it. (*The Education Committee removed this provision from the bill*).

VIII. Amendments:

#1 by Education”

Deletes the eligibility requirement that a recipient must have a signed agreement for hire by a school district.