

By Senator Legg

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to public school teachers; creating s.
3 1012.731, F.S.; providing legislative intent; defining
4 the term "school district"; establishing the Florida
5 Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship Program;
6 providing eligibility criteria; requiring a school
7 district to annually submit the number of eligible
8 teachers to the Department of Education; providing for
9 funding and disbursement of funds; providing an
10 effective date.

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

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14 Section 1. Section 1012.731, Florida Statutes, is created
15 to read:

16 1012.731 The Florida Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship
17 Program.—

18 (1) LEGISLATIVE INTENT.—The Legislature recognizes that
19 teachers play a critical role in preparing students to achieve a
20 high level of academic performance. The Legislature further
21 recognizes that research has linked student performance to a
22 teacher's own academic achievements. Therefore, it is the intent
23 of the Legislature to designate teachers who have achieved high
24 academic standards during their own education as Florida's Best
25 and Brightest Teacher scholars.

26 (2) DEFINITION.—For purposes of this section, the term
27 "school district" includes the Florida School for the Deaf and
28 the Blind and a charter school governing board.

29 (3) PROGRAM.—There is created the Florida Best and

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30 Brightest Teacher Scholarship Program to be administered by the
31 Department of Education. Beginning in the 2016-2017 school year,
32 the scholarship program shall provide categorical funding for
33 scholarships to be awarded to teachers who have demonstrated a
34 high level of academic achievement.

35 (4) TEACHER ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA.—

36 (a) To be eligible for a Florida Best and Brightest Teacher
37 scholarship:

38 1. A teacher must have scored at or above the 60th
39 percentile on either the SAT or the ACT, based upon the
40 percentile ranks in effect when the teacher took the assessment,
41 and must have been evaluated as highly effective pursuant to s.
42 1012.34; or

43 2. A teacher who is in his or her first year and who has
44 not been evaluated pursuant to s. 1012.34 must have scored at or
45 above the 80th percentile on either the SAT or the ACT, based
46 upon the percentile ranks in effect when the teacher took the
47 assessment.

48 (b) In order to demonstrate eligibility for an award, a
49 teacher must submit to the school district no later than October
50 1 an official record of his or her SAT or ACT score
51 demonstrating that he or she scored at or above the 60th
52 percentile, based upon the percentile ranks in effect when he or
53 she took the assessment. If a teacher is deemed eligible by the
54 school district, the teacher will remain eligible as long as he
55 or she is employed by the school district and maintains or, if
56 the teacher is a first-year teacher, is evaluated at the highly
57 effective level pursuant to s. 1012.34.

58 (5) ELIGIBILITY NOTIFICATION; FUNDING AND DISBURSEMENT OF

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59 FUNDS.-

60 (a) By December 1 of each year, each school district shall
61 submit to the department the number of eligible teachers who
62 qualify for the scholarship.

63 (b) By February 1 of each year, the department shall
64 disburse scholarship funds, in an amount prescribed by the
65 Legislature in the General Appropriations Act, to each school
66 district for eligible teachers to receive a scholarship. If the
67 number of eligible teachers exceeds the total appropriation
68 authorized in the General Appropriation Act, the department
69 shall prorate the per-teacher scholarship amount.

70 (c) By April 1 of each year, each school district shall
71 provide payment of the scholarship to each eligible teacher.

72 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2016.