

1 A bill to be entitled

2 An act relating to classroom teachers and school
3 principals; creating s. 1009.951, F.S.; creating the
4 Classroom Teacher Student Loan Forgiveness Program;
5 providing for administration of the program; providing
6 eligibility requirements; providing requirements for
7 program participation; providing for loan payment
8 distribution under certain circumstances; providing
9 for continued eligibility; providing that a student
10 loan must meet certain criteria; providing that a
11 payment under the program is not taxable income;
12 providing for funding and rulemaking; amending s.
13 1012.59, F.S.; requiring the State Board of Education
14 to waive certain fees for an individual who is taking
15 specified examinations for the first time; repealing
16 s. 1012.731, F.S., relating to the Florida Best and
17 Brightest Teacher Scholarship Program; repealing s.
18 1012.732, F.S., relating to The Florida Best and
19 Brightest Principal Scholarship Program; providing an
20 effective date.

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

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24 Section 1. Section 1009.951, Florida Statutes, is created
25 to read:

26 1009.951 Classroom Teacher Student Loan Forgiveness
 27 Program.—The Legislature recognizes that Florida's teacher
 28 shortage is a critical issue within this state. In an effort to
 29 recruit and retain Florida's best, the Classroom Teacher Student
 30 Loan Forgiveness Program shall encourage qualified individuals
 31 to seek employment in public schools with critical staffing
 32 needs as identified by high teacher turnover rates.

33 (1) There is established the Classroom Teacher Student
 34 Loan Forgiveness Program to be administered by the Department of
 35 Education to increase the employment and retention of classroom
 36 teachers in a public school with at least a 50-percent year-to-
 37 year teacher turnover rate, as determined by comparing the
 38 teacher roster at the end of the previous school year to the
 39 teacher roster of the October student membership survey of the
 40 current year.

41 (2) To be eligible for the program, an individual:

42 (a) Must be a resident of the state.

43 (b) Must have graduated from a postsecondary educational
 44 institution in the state with a bachelor's degree or higher in
 45 education.

46 (c) Must be a classroom teacher, as defined in s.
 47 1012.01(2)(a), who will teach at a public school with at least a
 48 50-percent year-to-year teacher turnover rate.

49 (d) Must be enrolled in a federal income-based student
 50 loan repayment program.

51 (3) An individual who meets the requirements of subsection
52 (2) may apply to the department for acceptance into the program.
53 Individuals shall be accepted on a first-come, first-served
54 basis. Upon acceptance into the program, and from the funds
55 appropriated for the program, the department shall make payments
56 in equal monthly installments to the holder of the individual's
57 student loan in a minimum amount of \$4,000 total per year for a
58 period of 5 years and send receipt of such payment to the
59 program participant. The state is not responsible for the
60 collection of any interest charges or other remaining balances.
61 An individual maintains his or her eligibility for the program
62 as long as he or she continues to teach at the public school
63 where he or she taught when accepted into the program or at
64 another public school with at least a 50-percent year-to-year
65 teacher turnover rate.

66 (4) Only loans that are not in default and issued pursuant
67 to the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, to pay the
68 costs of a postsecondary education shall be covered under the
69 program.

70 (5) A payment under this section is not taxable income and
71 shall be made directly to the holder of the individual's student
72 loan.

73 (6) The Legislature shall appropriate funds for the
74 administration of the program.

75 (7) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to

76 | administer the program.

77 | Section 2. Paragraph (d) is added to subsection (3) of
78 | section 1012.59, Florida Statutes, to read:

79 | 1012.59 Certification fees.—

80 | (3) The State Board of Education shall waive initial
81 | general knowledge, professional education, and subject area
82 | examination fees and certification fees for:

83 | (d) An individual who is taking an examination for the
84 | first time.

85 | Section 3. Section 1012.731, Florida Statutes, is
86 | repealed.

87 | Section 4. Section 1012.732, Florida Statutes, is
88 | repealed.

89 | Section 5. This act shall take effect July 1, 2019.