



2023-2024 General Assembly

HOUSE BILL 259: 2023 Appropriations Act, Sec. 7.44: Teacher Assistant Tuition Reimbursement Program

Committee:
Introduced by:
Analysis of: Sec. 7.44 of S.L. 2023-134

Date: November 16, 2023
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OVERVIEW: Section 7.44 of S.L. 2023-134 codifies the Teacher Assistant Tuition Reimbursement Program (Program) which provides tuition assistance to part-time or full-time teacher assistants working in local school administrative units (LEAs) to pursue a college degree that will result in teacher licensure. LEAs can apply to participate in the Program pursuant to a process established by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The applications must identify current and ongoing needs for licensed teachers and the expected number of eligible teacher assistants that would participate in the Program. In evaluating applications, DPI must prioritize LEAs according to the following order: (i) LEAs that received funds under the Teacher Assistant Tuition Reimbursement Pilot Program established in prior Appropriations Acts of the General Assembly; (ii) LEAs located, in whole or in part, in a county with at least one LEA that received low wealth supplemental funding in the previous fiscal year; and (iii) all other LEAs.

Award of Funds – To the extent funds are made available for the Program, an LEA receiving funds under the Program must provide a teacher assistant participating in the Program an award of up to \$4,600 per academic year per teacher assistant for up to four academic years to defray the costs of tuition and fees at an educator preparation program at an institution of higher education while employed in the LEA as a teacher assistant. The following criteria apply under the Program:

- Tuition assistance awards granted under the Program can be for part-time or full-time coursework.
- A local board of education can grant a teacher assistant academic leave to pursue coursework that can only be taken during working hours.
- A teacher assistant must fulfill the student teaching requirements of an educator preparation program by working as a teacher assistant at his or her employing LEA.
- A teacher assistant must continue to receive salary and benefits provided for teacher assistants while student teaching in the LEA.

Selection of Teacher Assistants and Monetary Requirements – The act directs DPI to adopt initial and continuing eligibility to participate in the Program with standards to ensure that only qualified, potential recipients receive an award of funds for tuition and fees under the Program, including the requirement for satisfactory academic progress toward achieving teacher licensure and the following requirements:

- The teacher assistant must be employed by the local board of education in the LEA.

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- *The teacher assistant must be enrolled or provide a statement of intent to enroll in an accredited institution of higher education in North Carolina with an educator preparation program approved by the State Board of Education to pursue teacher licensure.*
- *The teacher assistant qualifies as a resident for tuition purposes under State law.*

LEAs receiving grants pursuant to the Program must select teacher assistants to receive funds under the Program and prioritize teacher assistants who received an award in the prior academic year and who are making satisfactory academic progress towards achieving teacher licensure. Each local board of education participating in the Program must have a memorandum of understanding with the institution of higher education in which an award recipient under the Program is enrolled that includes procedures for at least the following: (i) remittance of the award from the local board of education to the institution of higher education; (ii) endorsement of the funds awarded to the recipient to the institution of higher education for deposit into the account of the institution; (iii) return of a pro rata share of funds to the local board of education in the event a recipient withdraws from the institution of higher education prior to the end of a term or the recipient's employment with the local board of education is terminated.

Local and State Reports – *By September 1 of each school year following at least six months of participation in the Program for that year, local boards of education participating in the Program must report at least the following information to DPI: (i) the number and amount of funds in tuition assistance awards provided to teacher assistants; (ii) the number of teacher assistant recipients who achieved teacher licensure, including the period of time from the issue of an initial tuition assistance award to the time of achieving licensure; (iii) the number of recipients who remained employed in the LEA after achieving teacher licensure. By December 1, 2024, and annually thereafter for each year funds are awarded pursuant to the Program, DPI must aggregate the information in the local reports and report that information to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee.*

This section became effective July 1, 2023, and applies beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.