

HB213 ENGROSSED



1 5LJ8M3-2
2 By Representative Lovvorn
3 RFD: Ways and Means Education
4 First Read: 23-Mar-23
5
6 2023 Regular Session



HB213 Engrossed

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A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

Relating to the Volunteer Rescue Squad Tuition Reimbursement Act of 2018; to amend Sections 22-18-60, 22-18-61, 22-18-63, and 22-18-64, Code of Alabama 1975, to decrease the required contracted for service time after graduation and licensing from three years to two years; to expand the program to include students who contract and provide service to ambulance services; to provide exclusions from reimbursement; and to increase the amount of operational expenses reimbursed to the Alabama Community College System; and to add Section 22-18-61.1 to the Code of Alabama 1975, to provide for the retroactive reimbursement of certain fees and expenses.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. Sections 22-18-60, 22-18-61, 22-18-63, and 22-18-64 of the Code of Alabama 1975, are amended to read as follows:

"§22-18-60

For the purposes of this article, the following terms shall have the following meanings:



HB213 Engrossed

29 (1) ACCS. The Alabama Community College System.

30 (2) AMBULANCE SERVICE. An ambulance service located in
31 this state which is a member of the Alabama Association of
32 Ambulance Services.

33 ~~(2)~~ (3) ASSOCIATIONS. The Alabama Association of Rescue
34 Squads ~~or,~~ the Alabama Association of Volunteer Fire
35 Departments, or the Alabama Association of Ambulance Services.

36 ~~(3)~~ (4) EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES PERSONNEL (EMSP). All
37 recognized levels of personnel licensed by the Alabama
38 Department of Public Health, who have met all primary ~~and/or~~
39 or renewal educational requirements, or both, set by the
40 Alabama Department of Public Health, and who are allowed to
41 provide medical care within the level of their scope of
42 practice granted by the Office of Emergency Medical Services
43 ~~(OEMS)~~ within the Alabama Department of Public Health.

44 ~~(4)~~ (5) FIRE COLLEGE. The Alabama Fire College.

45 ~~(5)~~ (6) STUDENT. A student enrolled in an emergency
46 medical services certification program at a member institution
47 of the ~~Alabama Community College System~~ ACCS, the ~~Alabama Fire~~
48 ~~College~~ fire college, or the University of South Alabama.

49 (7) TUITION COSTS. Includes the actual cost of tuition
50 and fees required to complete an approved course of
51 instruction for EMSP certification, as determined by each
52 eligible educational institution.

53 ~~(6)~~ (8) VOLUNTEER RESCUE SQUAD. A volunteer rescue squad
54 located in the State of Alabama and is a member of the Alabama
55 Association of Rescue Squads.

56 ~~(7)~~ (9) VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT. A volunteer fire



HB213 Engrossed

57 department located in ~~the State of Alabama and is a member of~~
58 ~~the Alabama Association of Volunteer Fire Departments~~ this
59 state."

60 "§22-18-61

61 (a) The ~~Alabama Community College System~~ ACCS, the
62 ~~Alabama Fire College~~ fire college, and the University of South
63 Alabama, in consultation with the associations, shall jointly
64 develop and administer a student tuition reimbursement program
65 for students ~~that agree in the form of an enforceable~~ who
66 ~~contract agreement,~~ to provide two years of emergency medical
67 services for volunteer rescue squads ~~or,~~ volunteer fire
68 departments ~~in Alabama,~~ or ambulance services after becoming a
69 licensed EMSP ~~subject to the student agreeing to provide three~~
70 ~~years of service to a volunteer rescue squad or volunteer fire~~
71 ~~department.~~

72 (b) (1) Tuition reimbursement under this article shall
73 ~~be the actual~~ cover tuition costs paid by the student
74 ~~associated with obtaining certification~~ or the volunteer
75 rescue squad, volunteer fire department, ambulance service, or
76 an association on behalf of the student of which the student
77 is a member. Tuition paid by the volunteer rescue squad,
78 volunteer fire department, ambulance service, or association
79 shall be reimbursed directly to the volunteer rescue squad,
80 volunteer fire department, ambulance service, or association.

81 (2) Tuition reimbursement under this article shall not
82 include any tuition costs covered by grants or other monetary
83 awards provided to a student including, but not limited to,
84 federal education grants and scholarships, as determined by



HB213 Engrossed

85 the ACCS.

86 (3) Tuition costs shall not be reimbursed until the
87 student provides ACCS and the associations with documentation
88 that he or she has successfully completed the approved course
89 of instruction, proof of passing the certification exam,
90 production of a valid EMSP license from the Alabama Department
91 of Public Health and a contractual agreement to comply with
92 the service requirements.

93 (c) In the event that a tuition reimbursement recipient
94 fails to meet the service requirements for any reason other
95 than extreme hardship as defined within the joint agreement
96 required in Section 22-18-64(b), the individual shall be
97 deemed to have breached the underlying contract and shall be
98 liable in the form of monetary damages to the state for the
99 immediate repayment of the total tuition ~~amount~~ costs
100 reimbursed, plus interest at the rate of eight percent. The
101 associations shall notify ACCS of recipients who fail to meet
102 the service requirements.

103 (d) Beginning with the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the
104 amount of tuition reimbursement available to students shall be
105 divided among volunteer fire departments, rescue squads, and
106 ambulance services based on available appropriations. The ACCS
107 shall create operational procedures to ensure that funds and
108 volunteer service commitments are split equitably among
109 volunteer fire departments, rescue squads, and ambulance
110 services. Notwithstanding the foregoing, priority shall be
111 given to volunteer fire departments, rescue squads, and
112 nonprofit ambulance services."



HB213 Engrossed

113 "§22-18-63

114 (a) The tuition reimbursement program is subject to
115 direct appropriations from the Education Trust Fund.

116 (b) Any monies appropriated for the program that are
117 unexpended at the end of a fiscal year shall not revert, but
118 shall be carried forward for use of the program in the next
119 fiscal year.

120 (c) Beginning in the 2024-2025 fiscal year, any
121 unexpended funds in excess of five hundred thousand dollars
122 (\$500,000) shall be transferred to the fire college to provide
123 emergency medical services equipment and operations grants to
124 volunteer fire departments and rescue squads. Grants shall be
125 approved by the Alabama Joint Fire Council."

126 "§22-18-64

127 (a) The ACCS shall annually report on the condition and
128 accomplishments of the tuition reimbursement program to the
129 Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives, President
130 Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Chair of the House Ways and
131 Means Education Committee, the Chair of the Senate Finance and
132 Taxation Education Committee, and the Deputy Director of the
133 Legislative Services Agency, Fiscal Division. The report shall
134 include the number of students participating in the program
135 and the amount of tuition reimbursed for the reporting year.
136 The member institutions of the ACCS, the ~~Fire College~~ fire
137 college, and the University of South Alabama shall provide
138 this information to ACCS for inclusion in the annual report.
139 The report shall be submitted by the fifth legislative day of
140 each regular session of the Legislature.



HB213 Engrossed

141 (b) The ACCS, the ~~Fire College~~ fire college, and the
142 University of South Alabama shall enter into a joint agreement
143 to implement and administer the tuition reimbursement program,
144 which shall include provisions for ensuring that operational
145 expenses for the program in a fiscal year do not exceed ~~two~~ 10
146 percent of the funding for the program in that fiscal year.
147 The joint agreement shall provide for limiting the acceptance
148 of applications for the program or limiting tuition
149 reimbursements when necessary, or both.

150 (c) Any monies received for the operations of the
151 tuition reimbursement program, including repayments, interest,
152 and penalties paid because of failure to honor service
153 requirements, shall be used to fund tuition reimbursements."

154 Section 2. Section 22-18-61.1 is added to the Code of
155 Alabama 1975, to read as follows:

156 §22-18-61.1

157 Upon written request by an association or a member of
158 an association, the ACCS may retroactively consider
159 reimbursement of actual tuition costs, excluding required
160 fees, provided by the association or its members to a student
161 to pay his or her eligible tuition costs.

162 Section 3. Section 1 of this act shall become effective
163 on the first day of the third month following its passage and
164 approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.
165 Section 2 of this act shall become effective immediately
166 following its passage and approval by the Governor, or its
167 otherwise becoming law.



HB213 Engrossed

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House of Representatives

171 Read for the first time and referred23-Mar-23
172 to the House of Representatives
173 committee on Ways and Means
174 Education
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176 Read for the second time and placed27-Apr-23
177 on the calendar:
178 0 amendments
179
180 Read for the third time and passed02-May-23
181 as amended
182 Yeas 105
183 Nays 0
184 Abstains 0
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John Treadwell
Clerk