

HB124 INTRODUCED



1 HB124
2 TBSCH91-1
3 By Representative Collins
4 RFD: Education Policy
5 First Read: 13-Jan-26
6 PFD: 07-Jan-26



SYNOPSIS:

Under existing law, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education administers the Alabama Math and Science Teacher Education Program (AMSTEP), which provides a loan repayment award to eligible public K-12 math, science, and computer science teachers and an additional loan repayment award to the eligible applicants who are employed in underserved locations in the state.

This bill would change the name of the program to the Loan Assistance in Support of Educators in Alabama (LASEA) Program and would expand program eligibility to address additional educator shortages by extending eligibility for loan assistance to educators with certification in acute educator shortage programs and providing additional loan assistance if those educators are employed by public K-12 schools or school systems recognized as acute educator shortage locations.

This bill would specify that the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, in consultation with the State Department of Education, would determine which programs, schools, and school systems have acute educator shortages.

This bill would also require the commission, in



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consultation with the Alabama Commission on the Evaluation of Services, to develop an accountability and evaluation plan for the program and would provide further for the eligibility of certain applicants who have been continuously employed with a qualifying school.

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

Relating to the Alabama Math and Science Teacher Education Program (AMSTEP); to change the name of the program to the Loan Assistance in Support of Educators in Alabama (LASEA) Program; to amend Sections 16-5-50, 16-5-51, 16-5-52, 16-5-53, 16-5-54, 16-5-54.1, 16-5-55, and 16-5-56, Code of Alabama 1975; to allow educators who complete a program identified as having a shortage of certified educators and who obtain certification in those identified programs to qualify for the loan assistance program; to offer a supplemental payment from the loan assistance program to eligible applicants who are also employed in public K-12 schools or school systems with a shortage of certified educators as determined by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education in consultation with the State Department of Education; to add Sections 16-5-53.1 and 16-5-53.2 to the Code of Alabama 1975, to require the commission, in consultation with the Alabama



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Commission on the Evaluation of Services, to develop an accountability and evaluation plan for the program and to provide further for the eligibility of certain applicants who have been continuously employed with a qualifying school; and to repeal Section 16-5-54.2, Code of Alabama 1975, which provides for the reimbursement of individuals who have completed certain alternative certification programs.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. Sections 16-5-50, 16-5-51, 16-5-52, 16-5-53, 16-5-54, 16-5-54.1, 16-5-55, and 16-5-56 of the Code of Alabama 1975, are amended to read as follows:

"§16-5-50

The Alabama Math and Science Teacher Education Program ~~is~~ created pursuant to this article is renamed the Loan Assistance in Support of Educators in Alabama (LASEA) Program."

"§16-5-51

The purpose of the ~~Alabama Math and Science Teacher Education Program~~ Loan Assistance in Support of Educators in Alabama Program is ~~twofold~~ as follows:

(1) To encourage individuals to enroll in and complete educator programs ~~leading to~~ identified as having acute educator shortages and obtain Alabama certification in ~~mathematics, science, or computer science~~ those programs.

(2) To improve the educational system in Alabama by encouraging those who complete ~~the program~~ and obtain certification in acute educator shortage programs to accept ~~math, science, or computer science teaching~~ educator positions



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in Alabama public K-12 schools, ~~preferably in public~~ or school systems, including charter schools, ~~where the shortage of math, science, or computer science teachers, or any combination of the three, is most acute, or in a school that has been designated as a failing school, or any other term adopted to identify an underperforming school, by the State Board of Education or the Legislature~~ that have been identified as acute educator shortage locations."

"§16-5-52

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

(1) ACUTE EDUCATOR SHORTAGE. A shortage of certified educators in identified educator programs as determined by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education in consultation with the State Department of Education and the Alabama Commission on the Evaluation of Services.

(2) ACUTE EDUCATOR SHORTAGE LOCATION. A public K-12 school or school system that has been identified as having an acute educator shortage.

~~(1)~~ (3) APPROVED INSTITUTION. A state-supported institution of higher education or a private nonprofit institution of higher education that satisfies all of the following:

a. Is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

b. Is approved by the State Board of Education to prepare ~~teachers of middle level or secondary math, science, or computer science~~ educators in programs identified as having



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an acute educator shortage.

c. Is eligible to receive Title IV federal student aid program funds.

~~d. Maintains its primary headquarters in Alabama.~~

(4) BASE SUPPORT. Loan assistance in support of educators who are certified in a program identified as having an acute educator shortage pursuant to Section 16-5-54.

~~(2) (5) CHARTER SCHOOL. A form of public K-12 school. A teacher~~ established pursuant to Chapter 6F. An educator employed by a charter school accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges is eligible ~~to participate in the program. A teacher~~ for the base support provided in this article. An educator employed by a charter school is not eligible for the ~~acute shortage area supplement~~ supplemental support provided in this article.

~~(3) (6) COMMISSION. The Alabama Commission on Higher Education.~~

(7) EDUCATOR. A full-time employee of a public K-12 school or school system whose function is to work with students in support of their efforts to learn and obtain an education.

~~(4) (8) ELIGIBLE APPLICANT. A person~~ An individual who satisfies the criteria set out in this article and is eligible under rules adopted by the commission.

~~(5) (9) PROGRAM. The Alabama Math and Science Teacher Education Program~~ Loan Assistance in Support of Educators in Alabama Program created by this article and administered by the commission that provides loan ~~repayments~~ assistance to ~~a~~



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teacher an educator with a valid Alabama professional educator certificate who is endorsed in ~~math, science, or computer science who teaches math, science, or computer science courses for which the teacher is properly certified for three-fourths of the full-time teaching load in the Alabama public school system~~ a program identified as having an acute educator shortage.

~~(6) SCIENCE. Biology, chemistry, physics, and general science.~~

(10) SUPPLEMENTAL SUPPORT. Loan assistance in support of educators who qualify for base support pursuant to Section 16-5-54 and are employed in an acute educator shortage location.

~~(7) (11) YEAR. A school year that shall be divided into~~ The fall and spring semesters. The term does not mean ~~calendar, fiscal, or scholastic year~~ of an academic year of a public K-12 school or school system."

"§16-5-53

(a) ~~The Alabama Math and Science Teacher Education Program~~ program shall be administered by the commission, which may adopt ~~any~~ rules necessary for the administration of the program.

(b) A percentage of any annual appropriations received by the program, not to exceed 10 percent, may be expended for its operation and maintenance. Any funds appropriated to the program shall be non-reverting at the end of each fiscal year.

(c) The determination of acute educator shortages and acute educator shortage locations shall be made at least once



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every academic year."

"§16-5-54

(a) The program shall provide two levels of payment for loan assistance: (i) base support in the amount of seven thousand five hundred dollars (\$7,500) per year worked or three thousand seven hundred fifty dollars (\$3,750) per semester, for a maximum of four consecutive years, and (ii) supplemental support in the amount of three thousand dollars (\$3,000) per year worked or one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) per semester worked, for a maximum of four consecutive years. Depending on eligibility, an eligible applicant may receive the base support or both the base support and supplemental support.

(b) To be eligible for the base~~program of three thousand seven hundred fifty dollars (\$3,750) per semester for math and science teachers and one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) per semester for computer science teachers,~~
an support an eligible applicant shall satisfy all of the following:

(1) Is a citizen or a lawful permanent resident of the United States.

(2) Is a resident of Alabama. The commission shall accept any one of the following as proof of residency:

a. A current valid Alabama driver license.

b. A current valid Alabama vehicle registration.

c. A current valid Alabama voter registration card.

~~(1) Be~~ (3) Is a graduate of ~~a State Board of Education~~
an approved program ~~in math, science, or computer science,~~ at



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the baccalaureate or master's level ~~after the 2018 spring semester term~~ from an approved ~~Alabama~~ institution and ~~held an initial middle level or secondary professional educator certificate endorsed in math, science, or computer science that was~~ has been issued an Alabama educator certificate based upon completion of the approved program ~~in math, science, or computer science. A teacher~~ identified as having an acute educator shortage. An educator who only earns a passing score on the Praxis test ~~in math, science, or computer science~~ to add a certificate endorsement for ~~math, science, or computer science,~~ an approved program and ~~who~~ has not completed ~~an entire the~~ approved program, does not satisfy this requirement.

~~(2) Holds a valid Alabama professional educator certificate endorsed in middle level or secondary math, science, or computer science, or any combination of the three.~~

~~(3) Teaches~~

(4) Is employed by a public K-12 school or school system.

(5) Maintains a schedule in which at least three-fourths of the full-time ~~teaching load is comprised of math, science, or computer science in an Alabama public school system~~ workload addresses an acute educator shortage.

~~(4) Is a citizen or a lawful permanent resident of the United States.~~

~~(5) Is a resident of Alabama and provides documentation proving a permanent connection to the State of Alabama. The commission shall accept any one of the following as proof of~~



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residency:

~~a. A current valid Alabama driver license.~~

~~b. A current valid Alabama vehicle registration.~~

~~c. A current valid Alabama voter registration card.~~

(6) Has outstanding federal student loans, subsidized or unsubsidized.

(7) Satisfies additional continuing eligibility criteria established by the commission.

~~(b) In order to receive an additional supplement pursuant to this article, in addition to the criteria listed in subsection (a), a recipient shall also teach math, science, or computer science, or any combination of the three, in a public school system within the state with an acute teacher shortage in math, science, or computer science, or any combination of the three, for which the teacher is properly certified, as identified by the commission in consultation with the Alabama State Department of Education or in a school that has been designated as a failing school, or any other term adopted to identify an underperforming school, by the Alabama State Board of Education or the Legislature.~~ (c) To be eligible for the supplemental support an eligible applicant must meet the criteria listed in subsection (b) and also be employed in an acute educator shortage location."

"§16-5-54.1

~~(a)~~ Beginning in the fall semester of 2021, the benefits outlined in ~~subsection (a) of~~ Section 16-5-54 (a) and the criteria outlined in Section 16-5-54(b) and (c) shall also apply to ~~the following~~ eligible individuals, ~~pending~~



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~~authorization to teach~~ who are authorized to be educators in Alabama and ~~subsequent employment~~ are subsequently employed in an Alabama public K-12 school ~~or school system~~, who graduated from a regionally accredited college or university in another state at the baccalaureate or master's level after the 2021 spring semester term, and who may or may not reside within Alabama, exempting Section 16-5-54(b) (2).

~~(1) An individual who graduated from a regionally accredited college or university in Alabama or in another state who is certified to teach math, science, or computer science in another state, and who may or may not reside within Alabama.~~

~~(2) An individual who resides in another state and is a graduate of a State Board of Education approved program in math, science, or computer science, at the baccalaureate or master's level after the 2021 spring semester term from an approved Alabama institution and who holds an initial middle-level or secondary professional educator certificate endorsed in math, science, or computer science that was issued based upon completion of the approved program in math, science, or computer science. A teacher who only earns a passing score on the Praxis test in math, science, or computer science to add a certificate endorsement for math, science, or computer science and who has not completed an entire approved program, does not satisfy this requirement.~~

~~(b) The individuals listed in subsection (a) shall also satisfy all of the following criteria:~~

~~(1) Hold a valid Alabama professional educator~~



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~~certificate endorsed in middle-level or secondary math, science, or computer science, or any combination of the three.~~

~~(2) Teach a schedule in which at least three-fourths of the full-time teaching load is comprised of math, science, or computer science courses for which the teacher is properly certified in an Alabama public school system.~~

~~(3) Be citizens or lawful permanent residents of the United States.~~

~~(4) Have outstanding federal student loans, subsidized or unsubsidized.~~

~~(5) Satisfy additional continuing eligibility criteria established by the commission.~~

~~(c) In order to receive an additional supplement pursuant to this article, in addition to the criteria listed in subsections (a) and (b), a recipient shall also teach math, science, or computer science courses, or any combination of the three, for which he or she is properly certified, in a school system within the state with an acute teacher shortage in math, science, or computer science, or any combination of the three, as identified by the commission in consultation with the State Department of Education or in a school that has been designated as a failing school, or any other term subsequently adopted to identify underperforming schools, by the State Board of Education or the Legislature."~~

"§16-5-55

~~(a) The program shall be used to provide a loan repayment for federal student loans in the following amounts:~~

~~(1)a. Prior to the 2022 fall semester, five thousand~~



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~~dollars (\$5,000) per year, or two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) per semester worked, for a maximum of four consecutive years for a teacher with a valid Alabama professional educator certificate endorsed in middle level or secondary math or science who graduated from a teacher education program at an approved institution after the 2018 spring semester term and is teaching in an Alabama public school.~~

~~b. Three thousand dollars (\$3,000) per year, or one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) per semester worked, for a maximum of four consecutive years for a teacher with a valid Alabama professional educator certificate endorsed in computer science who graduated from a teacher education program at an approved institution after the 2021 spring semester term and is teaching in an Alabama public school.~~

~~c. Beginning after the 2022 spring semester, seven thousand five hundred dollars (\$7,500) per year, or three thousand seven hundred fifty dollars (\$3,750) per semester worked, for a maximum of four consecutive years for a teacher with a valid Alabama professional educator certificate endorsed in middle level or secondary math or science who graduated from a teacher education program at an approved institution after the 2018 spring semester term and is teaching in an Alabama public school. Payments made under this paragraph may only be made to eligible teachers who fulfilled the per semester requirements for the 2022 fall semester and forward.~~

~~(2)a. An additional two thousand five hundred dollars~~



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~~(\$2,500) per year, or one thousand two hundred fifty dollars (\$1,250) per semester worked, for a maximum of four consecutive years for a teacher who satisfies all criteria listed in Sections 16-5-54, 16-5-54.1, and 16-5-54.2, and who also is teaching math or science in a public school in a school system within the state with an acute teacher shortage in math or science, or both, as identified by the commission in consultation with the Alabama State Department of Education or in a school that has been designated as a failing school, or any other term adopted to identify an underperforming school by the Alabama State Board of Education or the Legislature.~~

~~b. An additional one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per year, or five hundred dollars (\$500) per semester worked, for a maximum of four consecutive years for a teacher who satisfies all criteria listed in Sections 16-5-54, 16-5-54.1, and 16-5-54.2, and who also is teaching computer science in a public school in a school system within the state with an acute teacher shortage in computer science as identified by the commission in consultation with the Alabama State Department of Education or in a school that has been designated as a failing school, or any other term adopted to identify an underperforming school, by the Alabama State Board of Education or the Legislature.~~

~~(b) Loan repayment award recipients shall reapply for the program annually.~~

(a) Program funds shall be awarded and distributed by the commission in the following manner:



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365 ~~(e)~~ (1) Loan ~~repayment~~ assistance awards shall be
366 distributed directly to ~~the recipient teacher~~ eligible
367 applicants in two disbursements during the applicable year:
368 One disbursement shall be made after January 1 and the second
369 disbursement shall be made after June 1. Each ~~recipient~~
370 eligible applicant shall provide documentation from the
371 employing public K-12 school or school system as proof ~~that he~~
372 ~~or she has taught for a~~ of employment for the requested
373 semester. If the award amount ~~is larger than~~ exceeds the
374 ~~outstanding~~ loan balance, the award amount shall be reduced to
375 ~~the amount of~~ match the loan balance.

376 ~~(d) The requirements of this article are contingent~~
377 ~~upon available funding for the program.~~

378 ~~(e)~~ (2) The commission shall determine the necessary
379 procedures for awarding loan ~~repayments~~ assistance if the
380 ~~number of~~ total awards made to eligible applicants ~~and~~
381 ~~recipients~~ exceeds available funding.

382 ~~(f)~~ (3) The ~~recipient~~ eligible applicant shall notify
383 the commission in writing of any change in status within 30
384 days after the change. Failure to notify the commission of a
385 change in status shall affect future eligibility. All of the
386 following constitute a change in status:

387 ~~(1)~~ a. A change in name.

388 ~~(2)~~ b. A change in residence.

389 ~~(3)~~ c. A change in employment status.

390 ~~(g)~~ (4) To receive ~~a loan repayment check~~ assistance
391 pursuant to this article, ~~a teacher~~ an eligible applicant
392 shall register online with the ~~state~~ Comptroller.



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393 (b) The requirements of this article are contingent
394 upon available funding for the program.

395 ~~(h)~~ (c) A loan ~~repayment check~~ assistance award is
396 considered income by the Internal Revenue Service, and
397 ~~recipients~~ eligible applicants shall be made aware of that
398 fact.

399 ~~(i) Any funds appropriated to the program shall be~~
400 ~~nonreverting.~~

401 ~~(j) Additional funds shall be made available to~~
402 ~~teachers who also teach math, science, or computer science in~~
403 ~~school systems of the state where the shortages of math,~~
404 ~~science, or computer science teachers, or any combination of~~
405 ~~the three, are most severe. The commission, in consultation~~
406 ~~with the Alabama State Department of Education, shall~~
407 ~~determine which school systems in the state have the greatest~~
408 ~~shortage areas.~~

409 ~~(k) A recipient who receives a loan repayment award and~~
410 ~~continues to satisfy employment criteria shall continue to~~
411 ~~receive an award for the four-year limit regardless of whether~~
412 ~~the employing school system retains its acute shortage~~
413 ~~designation or the employing school is removed from the~~
414 ~~failing school list. If a recipient leaves an acute shortage~~
415 ~~system or a failing school and accepts employment in a school~~
416 ~~system or school that does not hold an acute shortage system~~
417 ~~or failing school designation, the recipient shall no longer~~
418 ~~qualify to receive supplemental funds.~~

419 (d) An eligible applicant who receives the base support
420 and continues to satisfy employment criteria shall continue to



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receive an award for the four-year limit.

(e) An eligible applicant who receives the supplemental support and continues to satisfy employment criteria shall continue to receive an award for the four-year limit."

"§16-5-56

Any ~~person~~ individual or institution ~~aggrieved by not satisfied with~~ the actions of the commission in its administration of the program, ~~by~~ may submit a written petition ~~filed with to~~ the commission within 30 days after notice of the action ~~complained of, may request a rehearing by the commission.~~ If not satisfied with the response of the commission to the written petition, the individual or institution may request a rehearing within 20 days after the response of the commission is made. The commission shall schedule the ~~requested~~ rehearing ~~not less than 20, nor more than 30,~~ within 20 days after receipt of the ~~petition rehearing request.~~ The ~~aggrieved party individual or institution~~ may present written and oral evidence supporting its the petition and may be represented by counsel. The decision of the commission following the rehearing ~~shall be is~~ final."

Section 2. Sections 16-5-53.1 and 16-5-53.2 are added to the Code of Alabama 1975, to read as follows:

§16-5-53.1

(a) The commission shall develop an accountability and evaluation plan for the program that does all of the following:

(1) Identifies the goals, objectives, and expected



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outputs and outcomes of the program.

(2) Describes the specific activities of the program and how those activities will achieve expected outcomes.

(3) Defines what the expected metrics of success shall be and provides a monitoring plan to regularly assess performance.

(4) Provides an evaluation plan to assess the impact of expected outcomes.

(b) The commission shall consult with the Alabama Commission on the Evaluation of Services on the development of the accountability and evaluation plan.

§16-5-53.2

Any eligible applicant who met the requirements of the program and received a loan repayment prior to August 1, 2026, shall remain eligible for loan repayments pursuant to the requirements of the program as long as they remain continuously employed with a qualifying school.

Section 3. Section 16-5-54.2, Code of Alabama 1975, relating to documentation required from educators who received their certifications pursuant to an alternative certification program to receive loan repayments under AMSTEP, is repealed.

Section 4. This act shall become effective on August 1, 2026.