STATE OF NEW YORK

8359

IN SENATE

May 3, 2018

Introduced by Sen. KENNEDY -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Higher Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to establishing the New York state volunteer first responder loan forgiveness incentive program

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The education law is amended by adding a new section 679-k to read as follows:

§ 679-k. New York state volunteer first responder loan forgiveness incentive program. 1. Purpose. The president shall grant student loan forgiveness awards for the purpose of attracting and retaining volunteer ambulance workers, as defined in section three of the volunteer ambulance workers' benefit law, and volunteer firefighters, as defined in section three of the volunteer firefighters' benefit law. Such awards shall be made on a competitive basis, in accordance with rules and regulations promulgated by the corporation for such purposes, to applicants who meet the eligibility criteria.

2. Eligibility. To be eligible for an award pursuant to this section, applicants shall:

a. have outstanding student loan debt;

b. agree to work in a voluntary fire or ambulatory department in New York state for a period of no less than five years;

c. apply for this program within five years of college graduation; and

d. comply with subdivisions three and five of section six hundred sixty-one of this part.

3. Awards. Awards shall be granted to qualified applicants in the amount of up to ten thousand dollars per year, per applicant, not to exceed a duration of five years and not to exceed the total amount of such applicant's student loan debt. The corporation shall grant such awards within amounts appropriated for such purposes and based on the availability of funds. No one applicant shall receive more than a total of fifty thousand dollars upon the end of a five-year period.

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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4. Priority. First priority shall be given to applicants who have received payment of an award pursuant to this section in a prior year and remain eligible. Second priority shall be given to applicants who have graduated and obtained an undergraduate or graduate degree from a college or university located in New York state. Third priority shall be given to applicants who are completing the second, third, fourth or fifth year of service at a voluntary fire or ambulatory department in New York. Fourth priority shall be given to an applicant who can demonstrate economic need but did not receive an award during the first year of this program's operation. If larger numbers of applicants are eligible pursuant to this subdivision than funds available, applicants shall be chosen pursuant to rules and regulations promulgated by the corporation; provided, however, that each applicant chosen shall receive an award of up to ten thousand dollars in each year such applicant is accepted into the program.

5. Rules and regulations. The corporation is authorized to promulgate rules and regulations, and may promulgate emergency regulations, necessary for the implementation of the provisions of this section.

§ 2. This act shall take effect immediately.