

STATE OF NEW YORK

484

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

(Prefiled)

January 8, 2025

Introduced by Sens. OBERACKER, BORRELLO, GALLIVAN -- 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 rural teacher education loan repayment program

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

1 Section 1. The education law is amended by adding a new section 676-a
2 to read as follows:

3 § 676-a. Rural teacher education loan repayment program. 1. Defi-
4 nitions. For the purposes of this section:

5 a. "Rural school district" shall mean a school district providing
6 services within a rural area.

7 b. "Rural area" shall mean a county with a population of two hundred
8 thousand or less; or a town with a population density of one hundred
9 fifty or less per square mile.

10 c. "Student loan expenses" shall mean the aggregate total of annual
11 student loans for the cost of attendance at an undergraduate and/or
12 graduate institution leading to teaching certification. Interest paid or
13 due on such loans shall be deemed to be eligible for reimbursement
14 pursuant to this section.

15 2. Establishment. a. There shall be established within the department
16 the rural teacher education loan repayment program. The department
17 shall, in cooperation and coordination with the New York state center
18 for rural schools, annually identify rural school districts which are
19 having difficulty attracting and retaining teachers, and develop crite-
20 ria upon which awards shall be made to teachers who become employed by
21 such identified rural school districts who agree to provide teaching
22 services within such rural area for not less than five years.

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

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1 b. The commissioner is authorized, within amounts made available for
2 the purposes of this section, to make awards beginning January first,
3 two thousand twenty-six, to a teacher who as determined by the commis-
4 sioner to be taking employment in a rural area identified as being
5 underserved, who is licensed to teach in this state and who agrees to
6 for at least five years teach in such rural area. Such a teacher shall
7 be eligible for a loan repayment award of up to twenty thousand dollars
8 per year.

9 3. Awards. Rural teacher education loan repayment awards shall be
10 awarded annually. Such awards shall be allocated by the president in
11 accordance with the criteria established pursuant to subdivision two of
12 this section.

13 4. Limit on awards. Loan repayment awards made to a teacher pursuant
14 to subdivision two of this section shall not exceed the total qualifying
15 outstanding debt of the teacher from student loans to cover tuition and
16 other related educational expenses, made by or guaranteed by the federal
17 or state government, or made by a lending or educational institution
18 approved under title IV of the federal higher education act. Loan repay-
19 ment awards shall be used solely to repay such outstanding debt.

20 5. Default. Within such time as the commissioner shall by regulation
21 provide, a recipient of an award shall have practiced as a teacher in a
22 rural area in the state. If a recipient fails to comply fully with such
23 conditions, the president shall be entitled to receive from such recipi-
24 ent an amount to be determined by the formula:

$$25 \quad A = 2B(t-s)$$

26 t

27 in which "A" is the amount the president is entitled to recover, "B" is
28 the sum of all payments made to the recipient and the interest on such
29 amount which would be payable if at the times such awards were paid they
30 were loans bearing interest at the maximum prevailing rate; "t" is the
31 total number of months in the recipient's period of obligated services;
32 and "s" is the number of months of services actually rendered by the
33 recipient. Any amount which the president is entitled to recover under
34 this subdivision shall be paid within the five-year period beginning on
35 the date that the recipient failed to comply with this condition. Any
36 obligation to comply with such provisions shall be canceled upon the
37 death of the recipient. The commissioner shall promulgate regulations to
38 provide for the waiver or suspension of any financial obligation when
39 compliance would involve extreme hardship.

40 6. Rules. The commissioner shall consult with the New York state
41 center for rural schools, and the commissioner, in coordination with the
42 corporation, shall promulgate regulations to effectuate the provisions
43 and purposes of this section.

44 § 2. This act shall take effect on the one hundred twentieth day after
45 it shall have become a law. Effective immediately, the addition, amend-
46 ment and/or repeal of any criteria, rule or regulation necessary for the
47 implementation of this act on its effective date are authorized to be
48 made and completed on or before such effective date.