
Higher Education Committee

HB 2930

Brief Description: Expanding the pool of qualified teachers.

Sponsors: Representatives Wallace, Sells, Carlyle, Anderson and Haler.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Gives priority in receipt of conditional scholarships and loan repayments through the Future Teachers Conditional Scholarship and Loan Repayment (Future Teachers) and the Alternate Route Conditional Scholarship (Alt Route) programs to individuals seeking specialty endorsements in math approved by the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) as well as those individuals that are uniquely qualified to help schools succeed in addressing the achievement gap.
- Reduces student eligibility for the Future Teachers program from five years to two years.
- Adds a loan repayment benefit to the Alt Route program.
- Authorizes the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) to provide loan repayment through the Future Teachers and Alt Route programs, in combination with conditional scholarships received, up to the cost of attendance or \$15,000 per academic year, beginning in the 2012-13 academic year.
- Authorizes the HECB to provide loan repayment through the Future Teachers and Alt Route programs up to the cost of attendance or \$15,000 in the event funding for conditional scholarships has been exhausted, beginning in the 2012-13 academic year.
- Specifies that the HECB must assume monthly federal student loan payment obligations for up to 10 years as part of providing the loan repayment benefit.
- Specifies that a separate appropriation must be made for the conditional scholarships and loan repayment portions of the program.
- Allows the Future Teachers and Alt Route programs to be awarded together.
- Allows conditional scholarship awards to be used for any educational or personal expense.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Hearing Date: 1/26/10

Staff: Andi Smith (786-7304).

Background:

Future Teachers Program.

In 2004 the Legislature modified an existing but inactive conditional scholarship program so that it could be a flexible vehicle for targeting teacher shortage areas. The Future Teachers Conditional Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program (Future Teachers) was established. It was designed to encourage outstanding students and paraprofessionals to become teachers and to encourage current teachers to obtain additional endorsements in teacher shortage subjects.

Participants agree to teach in Washington K-12 public schools in return for conditional scholarships or loan repayments. Selection criteria include academic ability, contributions to the public school system, potential to serve as a positive role model for students, length of time until completion of the education program, and commitment to serve as a Washington classroom teacher. Each year the Legislature can designate subjects to receive selection priority if the applicants commit to teaching those subjects. Math, science, and special education are often among the priority designated subjects. Participants can receive conditional scholarships or loan repayments for up to five years. Award amounts cannot exceed tuition and fees at the participant's college or university, or full-time resident undergraduate tuition and fees at the University of Washington – whichever is lower.

Alternate Route Conditional Scholarship Program.

The Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification Conditional Loan Scholarship Program (Alt Route) was created to help school districts recruit teachers in subjects and geographic areas with teacher shortages. Funding is provided for students enrolled in alternative routes to teacher certification programs, approved by the Professional Educators Standards Board (PESB).

The programs are aimed at experienced paraeducators and midcareer professionals with expertise in subject areas in which Washington has shortages. Alternative route programs are typically more intensive and shorter in length than traditional teacher certification routes based on mentored internships and on-site training. As of this month, 772 people have transitioned to a new career teaching in statewide and geographic shortage areas through the Alternative Routes to Teaching Program. Ninety-seven percent of Alternative Route candidates have entered Washington's teaching force upon completion of their programs.

Much like the Future Teachers program, students receiving funding through the Alt Route program agree to teach in specified subject shortage areas in Washington K-12 schools, in return for conditional loan scholarships. The Washington PESB determines the shortage areas, selects the recipients, and administers the program. The HECB serves as the fiscal agent for the program.

Summary of Bill:

The legislation makes changes to two separate loan programs, the Future Teachers and the Alt Route programs.

Changes to the Future Teachers Program.

The HECB is directed to give priority in selecting scholarship recipients to those individuals who are seeking specialty endorsements in math approved by the PESB as well as individuals who are uniquely qualified to help schools address the achievement gap. Eligibility for the program is reduced from five years to two years. The HECB must receive separate appropriations for the conditional scholarship and loan repayment portions of the program.

Beginning with the 2012-13 academic year the HECB may provide students with loan repayment benefits in addition to providing conditional scholarships. The amount of conditional scholarship is currently capped in statute at the amount of tuition and fees charged at the institution attended by the participant or at the University of Washington, whichever is lower. The legislation allows the HECB to provide loan repayment in conjunction with the conditional scholarship up to the total cost of attendance or \$15,000, whichever is lower. In other words, if a student received a conditional scholarship for \$6,000 in a given academic year, the HECB could award them up to \$9,000 of loan repayment in the same academic year. Also beginning with the 2012-13 academic year, in the event that insufficient funds are available to provide conditional scholarships, then the HECB may provide loan repayment up to the total cost of attendance at the institution attended by the participant or \$15,000 whichever is lower. In providing the loan repayment benefit, the HECB must assume monthly federal student loan repayment obligations for a period of ten years or until the total loan repayment award has been satisfied.

Conditional scholarships and loan repayments may be awarded in conjunction with other financial assistance, including the Alt Route program. The scholarships may also be used for any educational or personal expenses.

Changes to the Alternate Routes Program.

The PESB is directed to give priority in selecting scholarship recipients to those individuals who are seeking specialty endorsements in math approved by the PESB as well as individuals who are uniquely qualified to help schools address the achievement gap.

Beginning in the 2012-13 academic year a loan repayment component is added to the existing conditional scholarship program. In the event that funds are not available to award conditional scholarships, the PESB may provide loan repayment up to the total cost of attendance at the institution attended by the participant or \$15,000 whichever is lower. In providing the loan repayment benefit, the HECB - acting as fiscal agent - must assume monthly federal student loan repayment obligations for a period of 10 years or until the total loan repayment award has been satisfied.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 18, 2010.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.