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**HOUSE BILL 2727**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2016 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Stokesbary, Hickel, Zeiger, Manweller, S. Hunt, Pollet, and Johnson

AN ACT Relating to teacher retention; adding a new section to chapter 28A.405 RCW; adding new sections to chapter 28A.660 RCW; and creating new sections.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that: (1) The educational opportunity gap oversight and accountability committee reported in 2015 that "The opportunity gap in Washington state is persistent, pervasive, and unacceptable"; (2) every child should have an equal opportunity to learn, regardless of the child's zip code, poverty level, or race; (3) additional compensation in the form of annual teacher bonuses is essential to recruiting and retaining teachers to work in challenging, high poverty schools; and (4) Washington is currently experiencing a statewide teacher shortage. The legislature recognizes a need to increase the number of teachers willing to work in challenging, high poverty schools, both because the opportunity gap is most pervasive at these schools and because such schools are among those most impacted by the statewide teacher shortage. Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature to address the opportunity gap and the statewide teacher shortfall by providing additional compensation in the form of college loan forgiveness and annual bonuses to teachers who work in challenging, high poverty schools.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The definitions in this section apply throughout sections 3 through 6 of this act unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Challenging, high poverty schools" means schools where, for the prior school year, the student headcount enrollment eligible for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program was, as determined by the October 1st count of the comprehensive education data and research system (CEDARS) or successor data collection and reporting systems of the office of the superintendent of public instruction on May 1st of that prior year, at least:

(a) Seventy percent for elementary schools;

(b) Sixty percent for middle schools; or

(c) Fifty percent for high schools.

(2) "Eligible teacher" means a teacher who qualifies for a student loan repayment under sections 3 and 4 of this act.

(3) "Student loan" means a federal student loan that is repaid in whole or in part if the recipient renders service as a teacher in an approved challenging, high poverty school in Washington state.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall administer student loan repayments by direct payments on behalf of an eligible teacher to the holder of such loan, in accordance with section 4 of this act, for any eligible teacher who:

(1) Is not in default on a student loan for which the eligible teacher seeks forgiveness; and

(2) Is employed as a full-time teacher for service in an academic year at an approved challenging, high poverty school or an educational service district.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) An eligible teacher who chooses to receive student loan repayment under this section and section 3 of this act agrees to remain employed in the school or location for which the eligible teacher gained eligibility for student loan repayment under this section and section 3 of this act.

(2) An eligible teacher who is employed at a challenging, high poverty school and meets the requirements of section 3 of this act in any year and, in a subsequent year, fails to meet the requirements of section 3 of this act, may continue to teach in the school and may be eligible for the loan repayment program under this section and section 3 of this act in subsequent years.

(3)(a) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall agree to make a student loan payment for an eligible teacher in the amount of two hundred fifty dollars per month for the first and second year of teaching, three hundred dollars per month for the third year of teaching, three hundred fifty dollars per month for the fourth year of teaching, and four hundred dollars per month for the fifth and sixth years of teaching.

(b) The maximum total amount of student loan payments made by the office of the superintendent of public instruction for an eligible teacher under this section is twenty-three thousand four hundred dollars.

(c) An eligible teacher shall enter repayment on any remaining principal and interest due on a student loan for which the office of the superintendent of public instruction has made payments under this section after the maximum total amount has been reached under (b) of this subsection.

(4) An eligible teacher who is participating in a loan repayment program under RCW 28B.102.055 or other state-funded loan repayment program, may choose to continue participating in such program or, if eligible, choose to participate in the loan repayment program under this section and section 3 of this act.

(5) This section and section 3 of this act do not authorize the office of the superintendent of public instruction to reimburse an eligible teacher for loan payments made before the eligible teacher entered the loan repayment program under this section and section 3 of this act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The superintendent of public instruction shall adopt rules to implement sections 3 and 4 of this act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.405 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Certificated classroom teachers are eligible for additional bonuses if they are employed in an instructional assignment in a challenging, high poverty school.

(2) "Challenging, high poverty schools" has the definition in section 2 of this act.

(3) School districts that employ teachers eligible for the salary bonus shall report those employees to the office of superintendent of public instruction by submitting for each employee the required data as determined by the superintendent of public instruction.

(4) School districts must document the eligibility of each teacher by maintaining on file evidence of employment and instructional assignments in the challenging, high poverty school.

(5) All requests must be submitted to the superintendent of public instruction by June 15th of the school year and shall be paid in the July apportionment and displayed on report 1197, in revenue account 4158.

(6) For each candidate, the superintendent of public instruction shall send the district the amount of the salary bonus set in the operating appropriations act plus an amount for the district's portion of mandatory fringe benefits. The amount of the salary bonus is two thousand five hundred dollars each school year in which the eligible teacher works in a challenging, high poverty school.

(7) The district must pay the bonus to the employee in a lump sum amount on a supplemental contract pursuant to RCW 28A.400.200 no later than August 31st of the school year.

(8) The salary bonus is included in the definition of "earnable compensation" under RCW 41.32.010.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  This act may be known and cited as the teacher retention act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Sections 2 through 5 of this act are each added to chapter 28A.660 RCW.

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