Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.

State of Arkansas
91st General Assembly
Regular Session, 2017

By: Senator A. Clark

A Bill

For An Act To Be Entitled
AN ACT TO INCREASE TEACHERS IN HIGH NEEDS SUBJECT AREAS; TO PROVIDE ENHANCED ARKANSAS ACADEMIC CHALLENGE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR TEACHERS WHO AGREE TO TEACH IN THE HIGH NEEDS SUBJECT AREAS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle
TO INCREASE TEACHERS IN HIGH NEEDS SUBJECT AREAS; AND TO PROVIDE ENHANCED ARKANSAS ACADEMIC CHALLENGE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR TEACHERS WHO AGREE TO TEACH IN THE HIGH NEEDS SUBJECT AREAS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 85, Subchapter 2, is amended to add an additional section to read as follows:

6-85-222. Enhanced scholarships.

(a)(1) A recipient of an Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship under this subchapter who meets the requirements under subsection (b) of this section is eligible for an enhanced scholarship award of:

(A) Five thousand dollars ($5,000) for the academic year in which the recipient either:

(i) Has earned at least fifty-seven (57) semester credit hours but less than eighty-seven (87) semester credit hours; or

(ii) Is classified as a junior by the approved institution of higher education in which the recipient is enrolled; and

(B) Five thousand dollars ($5,000) for each subsequent academic year in which the recipient:

(i) Enrolled in the scholarship program under this subchapter;

(ii) Is classified as a junior by the approved institution of higher education in which the recipient is enrolled; and

(iii) Has earned at least eighty-seven (87) semester credit hours.

(C) Five thousand dollars ($5,000) for the academic year in which the recipient:

(i) Earned at least eighty-seven (87) semester credit hours;

(ii) Graduated from an approved institution of higher education in which the recipient was enrolled; and

(iii) Was classified as a junior by the approved institution of higher education in which the recipient was enrolled.

(D) Five thousand dollars ($5,000) for each subsequent academic year in which the recipient:

(i) Graduated from an approved institution of higher education in which the recipient was enrolled;

(ii) Was classified as a junior by the approved institution of higher education in which the recipient was enrolled; and

(iii) Has earned at least eighty-seven (87) semester credit hours.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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February 21, 2017

To: Members of the Arkansas General Assembly

Subject: Enhanced Scholarship Awards

This is to advise you that the Governor has signed Senate Bill 26 into law. It provides for enhanced scholarship awards for students pursuing degrees in high needs subject areas.

The bill authorizes the Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship Program to provide additional scholarships for students pursuing degrees in high needs subject areas. The enhanced awards are based on the number of semester hours completed and the student's classification status.

I hope this information is helpful. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Governor of Arkansas
(B) Five thousand dollars ($5,000) for the academic year in which the recipient either:

   (i) Has earned at least eighty-seven (87) semester credit hours but no more than one hundred twenty (120) semester credit hours unless the recipient is enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program that requires more than one hundred twenty (120) semester credit hours; or

   (ii) Is classified as a senior by the approved institution of higher education in which the recipient is enrolled.

(2) A recipient is eligible to receive a maximum aggregate enhanced scholarship award of ten thousand dollars ($10,000) under subdivision (a)(1) of this section.

(b) To be eligible for an enhanced scholarship award under subdivision (a)(1) of this section, a recipient shall:

   (1) Maintain a postsecondary grade point average of 3.25 or higher on a 4.0 scale at an approved institution of higher education;

   (2) Be enrolled in a teacher education program at a four-year approved institution of higher education; and

   (3) Enter into a written agreement with the Department of Higher Education to teach for a minimum of five (5) consecutive years in a high-needs subject area as determined by the Department of Education.

(c) The written agreement entered into by the recipient and the Department of Higher Education under subdivision (b)(3) of this section shall provide that the recipient:

   (1) Shall seek licensure as a teacher from the State Board of Education within one (1) year of completing the teacher education program and earning a degree; and

   (2) Shall repay the enhanced scholarship award amount:

      (A) On a pro rata basis at an interest rate and on a schedule as determined by the Department of Higher Education for each year the recipient does not teach in a high-needs subject area if the recipient does not teach in a high-needs subject area as determined by the Department of Education for five (5) consecutive years after first becoming employed as a licensed teacher; or

      (B) In its entirety at an interest rate and on a schedule as determined by the Department of Higher Education if the recipient does not:
(i) Obtain licensure as a teacher from the State Board of Education within one (1) year of completing the teacher education program and earning a degree; 

(ii) Begin work as a licensed teacher in a high-needs subject area, as determined by the Department of Education, in the academic year immediately following becoming licensed; or

(iii) Teach in a high-needs subject area as determined by the Department of Education in the recipient’s first year as a licensed teacher.

(d)(1) The Department of Higher Education may defer the requirements under subdivisions (c)(2)(B)(ii) and (iii) if the Department of Higher Education, in consultation with the Department of Education, determines that there was no employment position available that would reasonably enable the recipient to meet the requirements.

(2) After the period of deferral, the recipient shall begin or resume teaching in a high-needs subject area or become subject to repayment under subdivision (c)(2) of this section.

(e)(1) By March 1 of each year, the Department of Education shall provide to the Department of Higher Education a maximum on the number of enhanced scholarships that should be awarded under this section for the following academic year based on the projected needs of licensed teachers in high-needs subject areas.

(2) The Department of Higher Education shall not award for an academic year more enhanced scholarships than the maximum number provided by the Department of Education under subdivision (e)(1) of this section.

(f) If the Department of Higher Education receives applications from more qualified applicants than the number of enhanced scholarships available or if funds are not available to award enhanced scholarships to all qualified applicants, the Department of Higher Education shall award the enhanced scholarships on a competitive basis as determined by the Department of Higher Education.

(g) If a recipient of an enhanced scholarship under this section withdraws from an approved institution of higher education so that under the rules of that approved institution of higher education the recipient is entitled to a refund of any tuition, fees, or other charges, the approved institution of higher education shall pay the refund to which the recipient
may be entitled to the Department of Higher Education to the extent of any
amount the Department of Higher Education has paid to the recipient for that
academic year.

(h) The Department of Higher Education shall promulgate rules to
implement this section.