

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 2350

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 2, 2022

The Senate Education Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 2350 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill establishes the Grow Your Own Teacher Loan Redemption Program in the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA). The purpose of the program is to encourage students who graduated high school from a school district, or lived in a school district, with a shortage of teachers to teach in that school district.

Under the bill, HESAA will offer loan redemption up to \$10,000 of principal and interest of eligible student loan expenses for each full year of employment by the program participant. The total loan redemption amount for a program participant, for five years of employment, will not exceed \$50,000. HESAA will not spend more than \$500,000 for program implementation in any State fiscal year.

To be eligible to participate in the program, an applicant is required to: be a resident of the State and maintain domicile in the State during participation in the program; have previously graduated high school in a school district designated by the Department of Education as having a shortage of teachers during the year in which the applicant submits a program application to HESAA or have resided in the jurisdiction in which the school district is located for more than five years; be hired as a certified teacher by the school district from which the applicant graduated high school or a school district located in a jurisdiction in which the applicant has resided for more than five years, provided that the district is experiencing a shortage of teachers as determined by the department; and have an outstanding balance on a State or federal student loan and not be in default on any loan.

A program participant will enter into a written contract with HESAA to participate in the program. The contract will specify the duration of the applicant's required employment, which will be no less than five years, and the total amount of eligible student loan expenses to be redeemed by the State in return for employment as a teacher in the school district.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to stipulate that HESAA will not spend more than \$500,000 for the implementation of this program in any State fiscal year. The committee amendments expand eligibility under the program to individuals employed full-time as a certified teacher in a school district with a shortage of teachers that is located in a jurisdiction in which the program participant has resided for more than five years. Lastly, the committee amendments remove the requirement that an applicant complete an approved course of study within five years prior to application.