

HOUSE BILL 251

By Haston

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49,
relative to special education.

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

SECTION 1. This act is known and may be cited as the "Tennessee Special Educator Scholarship Act."

SECTION 2. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 4, Part 7, is amended by adding the following as a new section:

(a) As used in this section, unless the context otherwise requires:

(1) "Eligible postsecondary institution" means an eligible independent postsecondary institution as defined in § 49-4-902 or an eligible public postsecondary institution as defined in § 49-4-902 that offers an eligible program of study; and

(2) "Eligible program of study" means a federal Title IV-eligible curriculum of courses leading to completion of a special education endorsement or certificate concurrently with a bachelor's degree at an eligible postsecondary institution.

(b) To be eligible for the Tennessee special educator scholarship, an individual must:

(1) Be a resident of this state in accordance with § 49-8-104;

(2) Not be in default on a federal Title IV educational loan or Tennessee educational loan;

(3) Not owe a refund on a federal Title IV student financial aid program or a Tennessee student financial aid program;

(4) Not be incarcerated;

(5) Have not yet attained a bachelor's degree from a postsecondary institution;

(6) Work as an educational assistant to a special education teacher at a Tennessee public school for a minimum of twenty (20) hours per week, while enrolled in an eligible postsecondary institution;

(7)

(A) Enroll in an eligible program of study at an eligible postsecondary institution for a minimum of six (6) credit hours per semester; and

(B) Have attained junior or senior status, as determined by the eligible postsecondary institution; and

(8) Agree to work full-time as a special education teacher in a Tennessee public school for at least three (3) consecutive years immediately following the individual's graduation from the eligible postsecondary institution.

(c) An individual who receives a Tennessee special educator scholarship under this section may continue to receive the scholarship up to seven hundred fifty dollars (\$750) per semester for a maximum of eight (8) semesters, or until the individual obtains the individual's first bachelor's degree, whichever occurs first; provided, that:

(1) The individual continues to meet all applicable nonacademic requirements for the scholarship;

(2) The individual maintains satisfactory academic progress; and

(3) Notwithstanding subdivision (b)(6), an individual who is terminated from the individual's employment as a special education assistant at a Tennessee public school for any reason has thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the individual's termination to accept another position as a special education assistant at a Tennessee public school while still receiving the scholarship. An individual who fails to accept another position within thirty (30) calendar days is ineligible for the Tennessee special educator scholarship.

(d) The Tennessee special educator scholarship awarded to an individual must be credited toward the individual's tuition and fees each semester.

(e) The Tennessee special educator scholarship is subject to the amounts appropriated by the general assembly.

SECTION 3. The Tennessee student assistance corporation may promulgate rules to effectuate the purposes of this act. The rules must be promulgated in accordance with the Uniform Administrative Procedures Act, compiled in Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4, Chapter 5.

SECTION 4. Section 3 of this act takes effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it. All other sections of this act take effect July 1, 2023, the public welfare requiring it.