

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

NO.: BHE 23-28

BOARD DATE: February 14, 2023

APPROVAL OF GUIDELINES FOR THE TOMORROW'S TEACHERS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby adopts the attached Guidelines for the Tomorrow's Teachers Scholarship Program.

VOTED: Motion approved and advanced to the full BHE by the Executive Committee on 2/6/2023; and adopted by the BHE on 2/14/2023.

Authority: M.G.L. c. 15A, § 19D as established by Ch. 126 Mass. Acts 2022, § 10; and Ch. 126 Mass. Acts 2022, § 2 (Line Item 7061-9805).

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Tomorrow's Teachers Scholarship Program Guidelines Background Information

Purpose

The Massachusetts FY23 Budget included a \$15 million appropriation for a teacher scholarship and loan repayment assistance program. The intent of this new funding is to eliminate teacher shortages faced by the Commonwealth, reduce the educational loan debt for currently employed teachers, and diversify the state's teaching profession.

Background

The wealth of information and studies on the teacher profession show that teacher shortages have been occurring across the country for many years. A [series recently published](#) by the Economic Policy Institute warns that the teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and perhaps worse than we know. This series points to data collected from states that details vacancies in certain subject areas, and more importantly, shows that fewer students are enrolling in teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities across the country. Similar to other states, Massachusetts is faced with shortages across geographical regions of the state and across disciplines such as STEM (Science Technology, Engineering and Math), English, and foreign languages. Although teachers in Massachusetts typically can expect a healthy job market, there continues to be a shortage of qualified teachers to meet the workforce demand.

The impact of this teacher shortage is that Massachusetts cannot ensure that every student will have an effective teacher and that every teacher has the opportunity to be effective. Since 2020, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has issued emergency licenses to help address the shortage issue. This process allows individuals more time to complete coursework to fully meet the licensing requirements. The high number of emergency licenses issued further points to the challenges of teacher shortages across the state. Thus, it is imperative that Massachusetts implement measures to incentivize and encourage more students to consider teaching as a profession. The FY23 \$15 million appropriation for a teacher education scholarship and loan repayment assistance initiative is a major step towards the Commonwealth's commitment to tackling the teacher shortage challenge.

Program Overview

Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 15A, § 19D (1-3), the Board of Higher Education (BHE) shall promulgate guidelines governing the Tomorrow's Teachers Scholarship Program. At a minimum, the guidelines must include:

1. Eligibility for the program, which shall be limited to qualified students (high school graduates, undergraduate students, and students enrolled in post-baccalaureate educator preparation programs) who: (i) agree to complete a qualified program (bachelor's degree or post-baccalaureate educator preparation program) at a public college or university, (ii) successfully complete the program and obtain appropriate teacher certification, and (iii) commit to teaching for 4 years at a public school;
2. An outreach plan to attract individuals from underrepresented populations to the education profession through the program, which shall diversify the educator workforce; and

3. Procedures for repayment of scholarship benefits by program recipients who fail to complete the 4-year teaching commitment, designed not to disincentivize low-income student participation; and which consider the amount of scholarship benefits received, the recipient's current income if not working as a public school teacher, whether the recipient's position helps support or educate students otherwise, and the recipient's length of service as a public school teacher.

The Tomorrow's Teachers Scholarship Program guidelines have been developed to meet all requirements of the enabling legislation. It should be noted that while the budget language establishes the program as the Tomorrow's Educators Scholarship, Department of Higher Education (DHE) staff believe the revised title, "*Tomorrow's Teachers Scholarship*," clarifies, consistent with the legislative intent of the enabling legislation ("...to encourage students to teach in public schools..."), that the goal of this program is to achieve an increase of classroom teachers as opposed to other school administrators, such as counselors and administrators. The Tomorrow's Teachers Scholarship Program Guidelines (Attachment A) address the enabling legislation's requirements by:

- Providing qualified students with scholarships for tuition, fees and related educational expenses (room, board, books, transportation, miscellaneous, etc.), based on the institution's annual Cost of Attendance (COA) for a bachelor's degree or post-baccalaureate coursework leading to the certification required for employment at a public school at a public college or university at a public college or university;
- Requiring recipients to teach one year for each year of scholarship assistance received, up to four (4) years; and
- Outlining terms for repayment of all scholarship benefits received if the teaching obligation is not met, inclusive of conditions that consider individual income and related circumstances to avoid economic hardship.

In furtherance of developing the required **outreach plan** to attract students from underrepresented populations to the education profession through this program, for the purpose of diversifying the teacher educator workforce, the DHE has secured the services of a Marketing and Communications vendor to assist with the development and implementation of a Strategic Outreach Plan that will facilitate its ability to reach the target population. Because this plan is not relevant specifically to the awarding of scholarship funds to qualified students, it is summarized below, rather than being outlined in the guidelines (Attachment A). The objectives of this plan include:

- Supporting public awareness through simple messaging
- Changing perception of teaching as a viable career
- Broadly publicize the Tomorrow's Teachers Scholarship and Loan Repayment Assistance program to maximize reach
- Differentiate the Tomorrow's Teachers Scholarship from other resources for teacher education students

The Outreach Plan is designed in alignment with priorities of the BHE's Strategic Plan for Racial Equity and will use Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure success. This work will be completed over the next six months to facilitate successful awarding of the scholarship and loan repayment assistance for the upcoming 2023-24 academic year.

Lastly, the Loan Repayment Assistance Program component of this initiative is being developed and implemented independent of the scholarship component, as it is designed to serve currently employed teachers who are no longer enrolled in college. The Loan Repayment Assistance Program will require development of a structured plan with eligibility criteria, as stipulated in the enabling legislation. Staff will keep the Board informed on the status and long-term outcomes of the Loan Repayment Assistance Program component as it is implemented.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board approve the guidelines (Attachment A), which will facilitate the completion of tasks required to implement the scholarship program.