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SENATE BILL NO. 174

Offered January 14, 2026

A *BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 23.1-615.2, relating to Virginia Student Teacher Scholarship Program established; report.*

Patron—Pekarsky

Referred to Committee on Education and Health

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 23.1-615.2 as follows:****§ 23.1-615.2. Virginia Student Teacher Scholarship Program established.**

A. As used in this section:

"Approved program of study" means an undergraduate program leading to a bachelor's degree offered by a baccalaureate public institution of higher education or baccalaureate private institution of higher education; a post-baccalaureate program; or a graduate program leading to a master's degree offered by an institution of higher education.

"Department" means the Department of Education.

"Program" means the Virginia Student Teacher Scholarship Program.

"Student teacher" means a student completing a required supervised clinical practice through a traditional educator preparation program in the Commonwealth who is assigned to complete such supervised clinical practice at a public elementary or secondary school in the Commonwealth without payment.

"Supervised clinical practice" means the summative supervised student teaching experience that includes at least 150 clock hours spent in direct teaching under the guidance of a cooperating teacher.

B. With such funds as are appropriated by the General Assembly for this purpose, there is hereby established the Virginia Student Teacher Scholarship Program for the purpose of reducing financial barriers to teacher licensure and reducing teacher shortages in the Commonwealth by awarding scholarships to student teachers in accordance with the provisions of this section. The Program shall be administered by the Council in coordination with the Department. Pursuant to the Program, the Council shall award scholarships to student teachers in an amount not to exceed \$7,500 to assist with expenses incurred during the supervised clinical practice required for licensure. The director of the Council may increase such maximum award amount to include a cost-of-living adjustment. A student teacher shall be eligible to receive no more than one scholarship pursuant to the Program per supervised clinical practice experience, regardless of the duration or academic structure of such experience.

C. To be eligible for a scholarship pursuant to the Program, an applicant shall (i) be a resident of the Commonwealth, (ii) be enrolled on a full-time basis in an approved program of study, (iii) complete all requirements of the approved program of study to be eligible to apply for supervised clinical practice, (iv) be placed in an unpaid position as a student teacher at any public elementary or secondary school in the Commonwealth for such supervised clinical practice, and (v) agree to work as a teacher at any public elementary or secondary school in the Commonwealth for a period of no less than three years immediately following licensure as a teacher, unless the Council determines, on a case-by-case basis, that extenuating circumstances apply. A student teacher's scholarship shall continue only during the period in which the student teacher (a) remains in good academic standing, as defined by the institution at which such student teacher is enrolled, and (b) continues to meet the Program eligibility requirements established in this subsection. A student teacher's scholarship shall be terminated if the student teacher is dismissed from the institution of higher education or educator preparation program for academic or disciplinary reasons or otherwise becomes ineligible for teacher licensure in the Commonwealth.

D. In administering the Program, the Council shall:

1. Develop and implement an application process to provide scholarships to eligible student teachers under the Program beginning with the 2026–2027 school year. Such process shall provide that, in the event that there are insufficient funds to provide an award to all eligible applicants, awards shall be prioritized based on each applicants' demonstrated financial need;

2. Establish a method for paying scholarship awards under the Program to the local school division to which the student teacher is assigned. The local school division shall use all funds received under the program for payment to eligible student teachers. A student teacher who receives a scholarship award under the Program shall not be considered a school employee for the purpose of fringe benefits or participation in the Virginia Retirement System; and

3. Implement guidelines to ensure compliance with all eligibility requirements of the Program. The Council may recover scholarship payments made to a student teacher who does not comply with clause (v) of

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59 subsection C unless it determines that extenuating circumstances exist.

60 E. In administering the Program, including for the purpose of prioritizing awards pursuant to subdivision
61 D 1, the Council may (i) require applicants to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid
62 (FAFSA) form, or any applicable successor program application or form, and (ii) use federal or state need-
63 analysis methodology to assess the financial need of applicants consistent with available appropriations.

64 F. The Council, in coordination with the Department, shall submit to the Governor and the General
65 Assembly and post in a publicly accessible format and location on its website an annual report measuring the
66 effectiveness of the Program that shall include (i) the total number of Program participants by local school
67 division, (ii) a survey of Program participants to measure such participants' experience with the Program,
68 and (iii) demographic data of Program participants, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender.

69 G. Nothing in this section shall be construed to exempt any individual from meeting educator licensure
70 requirements in accordance with rules and regulations established by the Board of Education.