

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 2nd Session of the 59th Legislature (2024)

3 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

4 FOR

5 HOUSE BILL NO. 4017

By: McBride

6
7 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

8 An Act relating to teachers; creating the Return to
9 Teach Signing Bonus Act; establishing a signing bonus
10 program for certain teachers; subjecting program to
11 availability of funds; listing requirements for
12 program participants; prescribing installment
13 payments for bonus; setting maximum amount of bonus
14 per teacher; describing process for bonus payments;
15 directing State Department of Education to verify
16 applicant information; excluding bonus from being
17 included in certain calculations; providing for
18 promulgation of rules; providing for codification;
19 and declaring an emergency.

20 BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

21 SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
22 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 6-401 of Title 70, unless there
23 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

24 A. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Return to
Teach Signing Bonus Act".

B. Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year and subject to the
availability of funding, the State Department of Education shall

1 establish and administer a signing bonus program for teachers who
2 return to teaching in Oklahoma public schools.

3 C. To participate in the signing bonus program, the applicant
4 shall:

5 1. Be a teacher with at least three (3) years of prior teaching
6 experience and a valid or expired teaching certificate issued by:

7 a. the State Board of Education,

8 b. the education certification entity of another state,

9 c. the National Board for Professional Teaching

10 Standards, or

11 d. the education certification entity of another country;

12 2. Have not been employed by an Oklahoma public school district
13 within the past five (5) years at the time of applying;

14 3. Agree to be a full-time public school teacher in the state
15 for a minimum of five (5) years;

16 4. Submit proof of his or her most recent teaching employment
17 which may include a paystub or letter from the school district
18 superintendent or board of education;

19 5. Submit proof provided by the school district where the
20 applicant will be employed as a full-time teacher; and

21 6. Any additional requirements established by the State Board
22 of Education.

23 D. The signing bonus shall be paid in five (5) equal annual
24 installments of Seven Thousand Dollars (\$7,000.00) per year for a

1 period of five (5) years. The total amount of the signing bonus
2 shall not exceed Thirty-five Thousand Dollars (\$35,000.00) per
3 participant. Upon verification required by subsection E of this
4 section, each installment of the signing bonus shall be paid to
5 participants no later than September 1 of each year or within thirty
6 (30) days of the first day of school, whichever is earlier. If an
7 applicant is approved to participate in the signing bonus program
8 after the school year has started, the signing bonus shall be
9 prorated for the first year based on the percentage of days the
10 participating teacher is contracted to work.

11 E. 1. Prior to payment of any signing bonuses, the Department
12 shall verify all of the information submitted by the applicant
13 pursuant to subsection C of this section is accurate and confirm the
14 applicant is eligible to participate in the signing bonus program.

15 2. Prior to the beginning of each school year after the
16 teacher's first year participating in the signing bonus program, the
17 teacher shall provide verification to the Department that the
18 teacher continues to be eligible for the signing bonus program,
19 including documentation from the Oklahoma school district where the
20 teacher is employed full time.

21 F. Any signing bonus paid pursuant to the Return to Teach
22 Signing Bonus Act shall not be included in the calculation of salary
23 for purposes of meeting the district or statutory minimum salary
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1 schedule or for purposes of calculating Teachers' Retirement System
2 of Oklahoma contributions or benefits.

3 G. The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to implement
4 the provisions of the Return to Teach Signing Bonus Act.

5 SECTION 2. It being immediately necessary for the preservation
6 of the public peace, health or safety, an emergency is hereby
7 declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and
8 be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

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