

1 ENGROSSED HOUSE  
2 BILL NO. 4017

By: McBride, Baker, and Waldron  
of the House

3 and

4 Pugh of the Senate  
5

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

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

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

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

24 B. Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year and subject to the  
availability of funding, the State Department of Education shall  
establish and administer a signing bonus program for teachers who  
return to teaching in Oklahoma public schools.

1 C. To participate in the signing bonus program, the applicant  
2 shall:

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

5 a. the State Board of Education,

6 b. the education certification entity of another state,

7 c. the National Board for Professional Teaching  
8 Standards, or

9 d. the education certification entity of another country;

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

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

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

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

19 6. Any additional requirements established by the State Board  
20 of Education.

21 D. The signing bonus shall be paid in five (5) equal annual  
22 installments of Seven Thousand Dollars (\$7,000.00) per year for a  
23 period of five (5) years. The total amount of the signing bonus  
24 shall not exceed Thirty-five Thousand Dollars (\$35,000.00) per

1 participant. Upon verification required by subsection E of this  
2 section, each installment of the signing bonus shall be paid to  
3 participants no later than September 1 of each year or within thirty  
4 (30) days of the first day of school, whichever is earlier. If an  
5 applicant is approved to participate in the signing bonus program  
6 after the school year has started, the signing bonus shall be  
7 prorated for the first year based on the percentage of days the  
8 participating teacher is contracted to work.

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

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

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

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