

# SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

**SENATE, No. 2661**

# **STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: OCTOBER 13, 2022

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2661 (1R).

This bill establishes the New Jersey Educator Scholarship Program in the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA), in coordination with the Department of Education. The purpose of the scholarship program is to provide incentives for students to pursue careers in education.

Scholarships would be annually awarded by HESAA to 50 students enrolled full time in an educator preparation program at an institution of higher education. Each student would receive a scholarship in an amount up to the remaining amount of tuition that is not covered by State, federal, or any other need-based grant or merit scholarship, for up to 18 credits for each semester of study. A scholarship, however, would not exceed the average in-State tuition amount charged by the four-year public institutions of higher education in the academic year in which the scholarship is awarded. A student would also receive an annual stipend of \$5,000 annually. A student would be eligible for the scholarship and stipend for four years of study or until the student receives a bachelor's degree and completes an educator preparation program, whichever occurs first.

The bill requires, within the first five full years after graduation, a student scholarship recipient to seek and accept full time employment as a teaching staff member with a public school district, charter school, or renaissance school in the State. The student would serve in employment with a public school for no less than three full school years, during which time the student would receive mentoring coordinated by the school in consultation with the Department of Education.

In order to be eligible for a scholarship under the program, a student is required to be a United States citizen, an eligible noncitizen, or meet certain other statutory requirements to be eligible for State financial aid. The department may establish additional eligibility requirements and minimum qualifications, and will determine an application and evaluation process for scholarship candidates. A student's scholarship would remain in effect provided that the student achieves satisfactory academic progress

and continues to meet eligibility requirements. The scholarship would not remain in effect for a student who: is dismissed from the program of study for academic or disciplinary reasons, is disqualified from employment by a school district due to the detection of criminal history record information under current law, becomes ineligible to receive a certificate of eligibility with advanced standing for any other reason, does not receive a degree within the first four years of the scholarship, withdraws from the program of study due to illness or a family emergency, or does not complete the required three full years of employment in a public school district within five years of receiving a bachelor's degree. Under certain circumstances, a student whose scholarship has been terminated may be required to repay as a debt to the State all or part of the amount of any stipend and the value of any scholarship received during the scholarship.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The Office of Legislative Services concludes that the establishment of the New Jersey Educator Scholarship program would result in an increase in annual State expenditures of \$1 million in the first year and would increase annually thereafter until reaching \$4 million in the fourth year and in subsequent years if scholarships are awarded to a new cohort of students in each year.