

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 2825

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 14, 2021

The Senate Education Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 2825.

The bill establishes a loan redemption program in the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (authority) for teachers who teach in a bilingual education or English as a second language program at public schools.

Under the bill, a program participant must be a resident of New Jersey and execute a contract with the authority. The authority will give priority under the program to teachers who are employed at a low performing public school, including a charter school or a renaissance school. The redemption of loans under the program will equal 25 percent of the participant's eligible student loan expenses, up to \$5,000, in return for each consecutive year of full-time employment as a teacher who teaches in a bilingual education or English as a second language program at a public school in which at least 10 percent of the students are enrolled in a bilingual education or English as a second language program. The total amount of eligible student loan expenses that would be redeemed under the program by a program participant, for four full school years of service, will not exceed \$20,000. A program participant would not be required to teach at the same public school for four consecutive years.

The bill directs the authority to annually post in a prominent location on its Internet website a list of low-performing schools at which a public school teacher may be employed in order to qualify for loan redemption under the bill.

A program participant who has entered into a redemption contract with the authority may nullify the contract by submitting written notification to the authority and assuming full responsibility for repayment of principal and interest on the full amount of his loans or that portion of the loans which has not been redeemed by the State in return for fulfillment of the contract. In the event of a program participant's death or total and permanent disability, the authority will nullify the service obligation of the program participant. The nullification will terminate the authority's obligations under the loan redemption contract.

The authority will annually submit a report on the loan redemption program to the Governor and the Legislature no later than August 1 of each year. The report will include, but not be limited to, the total number of participants receiving loan redemption under the program, the total number of participants who withdrew from the program or failed to complete the program's employment requirement, and the effect of the program on filling vacant teaching positions in a bilingual education or English as a second language program.