

1 HB368  
2 205675-1  
3 By Representative Lovvorn  
4 RFD: Ways and Means Education  
5 First Read: 03-MAR-20

SYNOPSIS: Under existing law, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education administers the Alabama Math and Science Teacher Education Program (AMSTEP), that provides student loan repayment for public high school math and science teachers to serve in underserved areas of the state.

This bill would include computer science teachers in the program.

This bill would allow teachers certified in another field of study, who complete a program in math, science, or computer science at a baccalaureate or master's level and earn certification in math, science, or computer science; qualified teachers who teach in Alabama but reside in other state; and individuals issued an Alabama bachelor's level professional educator certificate in math, science, or computer science pursuant to an alternative certification program to participate in the loan repayment program.

1                   This bill would allow teachers employed in a  
2                   school designated as a failing school to qualify  
3                   for supplemental funds and participate in the  
4                   program.

5                   This bill would also reduce the teaching  
6                   load requirement from a full-time teaching load of  
7                   math, science, or computer science courses to  
8                   three-fourths of the full-time teaching load being  
9                   comprised of math, science, or computer science  
10                  courses for which the teacher is properly  
11                  certified.

12  
13                                   A BILL  
14                                   TO BE ENTITLED  
15                                   AN ACT  
16

17                   Relating to the Alabama Math and Science Teacher  
18                   Education Program; to amend Sections 16-5-51, 16-5-52,  
19                   16-5-53, 16-5-54, and 16-5-55, Code of Alabama, and to add  
20                   Sections 16-5-54.1, 16-5-54.2, and 16-5-56, to the Code of  
21                   Alabama 1975; to allow teachers certified in computer science  
22                   and certain qualified teachers certified in other fields, who  
23                   return to college to complete a program in math, science, or  
24                   computer science and obtain certification in any of those  
25                   fields, to qualify for the loan repayment program; to expand  
26                   the loan repayment program to teachers of math, science, or  
27                   computer science in failing schools; and to reduce the

1 teaching load requirement from a full-time teaching load of  
2 math, science, or computer science courses to three-fourths of  
3 the full-time teaching load being comprised of math, science,  
4 or computer science courses for which the teacher is properly  
5 certified.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

7 Section 1. Sections 16-5-51, 16-5-52, 16-5-53,  
8 16-5-54, and 16-5-55 of the Code of Alabama 1975, are amended  
9 to read as follows:

10 "§16-5-51.

11 "The purpose of the Alabama Math and Science Teacher  
12 Education Program is twofold:

13 "(1) To encourage individuals to enroll in and  
14 complete programs leading to Alabama certification in  
15 mathematics, science, or computer science.

16 "(2) To improve the educational system in Alabama by  
17 encouraging those who complete the program to accept math, science, or computer science teaching positions in Alabama  
18 public schools, preferably in public school systems, including  
19 charter schools, where the shortage of math, science, or  
20 computer science teachers, or ~~both~~ any combination of the  
21 three, is most acute, or in a school which has been designated  
22 as a failing school, or any other term adopted to identify an  
23 underperforming school, by the State Board of Education or the  
24 Legislature.

25 "§16-5-52.

1           "For the purposes of this article, the following  
2 terms shall have the following meanings:

3           "(1) APPROVED INSTITUTION. A state-supported  
4 institution of higher education or a private nonprofit  
5 institution of higher education that satisfies all of the  
6 following:

7           "a. Is accredited by the Southern Association of  
8 Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

9           **"b. Is approved by the State Board of Education ~~or~~**  
10 **~~the State Department of Education~~ to prepare teachers of**  
11 **middle level or secondary math, science, or computer science,**  
12 **~~or both.~~**

13           "c. Is eligible to receive Title IV federal student  
14 aid program funds.

15           "d. Maintains its primary headquarters in Alabama.

16           "(2) CHARTER SCHOOL. A form of public school. A  
17 teacher employed by a charter school accredited by the  
18 Southern Association of Colleges and Schools is eligible to  
19 participate in the program. A teacher employed by a charter  
20 school is not eligible for the acute shortage area supplement  
21 provided in this article.

22           ~~"(2)~~ (3) COMMISSION. The Alabama Commission on Higher  
23 Education.

24           ~~"(3)~~ (4) ELIGIBLE APPLICANT. A person who satisfies  
25 the criteria set out in this article and is eligible under  
26 rules adopted by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

1           "~~(4)~~ (5) PROGRAM. The Alabama Math and Science  
2 Teacher Education Program created by this article and  
3 administered by the commission that provides loan repayments  
4 to a teacher with a valid Alabama professional educator  
5 certificate endorsed in math, science, or computer science who  
6 teaches math, science, or computer science courses for which  
7 the teacher is properly certified for three-fourths of the  
8 full-time teaching load in the Alabama public school system.

9           "~~(5)~~ (6) SCIENCE. Biology, chemistry, physics, and  
10 general science.

11           "~~(6)~~ (7) YEAR. A school year that shall be divided  
12 into fall and spring semesters. The term does not mean  
13 calendar, fiscal, or scholastic year.

14           "§16-5-53.

15           "~~(a)~~ The Alabama Math and Science Teacher Education  
16 Program shall be administered by the commission, which may  
17 adopt any rules necessary for the administration of the  
18 program.

19           "~~(b) The commission shall adopt standards for~~  
20 ~~awarding loan repayments to an Alabama public school teacher~~  
21 ~~who satisfies all of the following:~~

22           "~~(1) Has graduated from an approved institution.~~

23           "~~(2) Holds a valid Alabama professional educator~~  
24 ~~certificate endorsed in math or science.~~

25           "~~(3) Is teaching in an Alabama public school~~  
26 ~~full-time in the field of math or science.~~

1                   "~~(4) Is eligible to receive additional funds for~~  
2 ~~teaching math or science in a public school in a geographic~~  
3 ~~area with acute teacher shortages in math or science, or both.~~

4                   "§16-5-54.

5                   "(a) To be eligible for the base program of two  
6 thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) per semester for math  
7 and science teachers and one thousand five hundred dollars  
8 (\$1,500) per semester for computer science teachers, an  
9 applicant shall satisfy all of the following:

10                   "(1) Be a graduate of a State Board of Education ~~or~~  
11 ~~State Department of Education~~ approved program in math,  
12 science, or computer science, at the baccalaureate or master's  
13 level, after the 2018 spring semester term, from an approved  
14 Alabama institution ~~leading to~~ and hold an initial middle  
15 level or secondary professional educator certificate endorsed  
16 in math, science, or computer science that was issued based  
17 upon completion of the approved program in math, science, or  
18 computer science. A teacher who only earns a passing score on  
19 the Praxis test in math, science, or computer science to add a  
20 certificate endorsement for math, science, or computer  
21 science, and who has not completed an entire approved program,  
22 does not satisfy this requirement.

23                   "(2) Holds a valid Alabama professional educator  
24 certificate endorsed in middle level or secondary math,  
25 science, or computer science, or ~~both~~ any combination of the  
26 three.

1           "(3) Teaches a schedule in which at least  
2 three-fourths of the full-time teaching load is comprised of  
3 math, science, or computer science ~~full-time~~ in an Alabama  
4 public school ~~district~~ system.

5           "(4) Is a citizen or a lawful permanent resident of  
6 the United States.

7           "(5) ~~Has been~~ Is a resident of Alabama ~~for at least~~  
8 ~~12 months before the application deadline~~ and provides  
9 documentation proving a permanent connection to the State of  
10 Alabama. The commission shall accept any one of the following  
11 as proof of residency:

12           "a. A current valid Alabama driver's license.

13           "b. A current valid Alabama vehicle registration.

14           "c. A current valid Alabama voter registration card.

15           "(6) Has outstanding federal student loans,  
16 subsidized or unsubsidized.

17           "(7) Satisfies additional continuing eligibility  
18 criteria established by the commission.

19           "(b) In order to receive ~~a~~ an additional supplement  
20 pursuant to this article, in addition to the criteria listed  
21 in subsection (a), a recipient shall also teach math, science,  
22 or computer science, or both any combination of the three, in  
23 ~~a geographic area~~ public school system within the state with  
24 an acute teacher shortage in math, science, or computer  
25 science, or both any combination of the three, for which the  
26 teacher is properly certified, as identified by the commission  
27 in consultation with the State Department of Education or in a

1 school which has been designated as a failing school, or any  
2 other term adopted to identify an underperforming school, by  
3 the State Board of Education or the Legislature.

4 "§16-5-55.

5 "(a) The program shall be used to provide a loan  
6 repayment for federal student loans in the following amounts:

7 "(1) Five thousand dollars (\$5,000) per year, or two  
8 thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) per semester worked,  
9 for a maximum of four consecutive years for a teacher with a  
10 valid Alabama professional educator certificate endorsed in  
11 middle level or secondary math or science who graduated from a  
12 teacher education program at an approved institution after the  
13 2018 spring semester term and is teaching in an Alabama public  
14 school. Three thousand dollars (\$3,000) per year, or one  
15 thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) per semester worked,  
16 for a maximum of four consecutive years for a teacher with a  
17 valid Alabama professional educator certificate endorsed in  
18 computer science who graduated from a teacher education  
19 program at an approved institution after the 2020 spring  
20 semester term and is teaching in an Alabama public school.

21 "(2) An additional two thousand five hundred dollars  
22 (\$2,500) per year, or one thousand two hundred fifty dollars  
23 (\$1,250) per semester worked, for a maximum of four  
24 consecutive years for a teacher who satisfies all criteria  
25 listed in ~~Section~~ Sections 16-5-54, 16-5-54.1, and 16-5-54.2,  
26 and who also is teaching math or science in a public school in  
27 ~~an area of the state with acute teacher shortages in math or~~

1 ~~science, or both, in a geographic area~~ a school system within  
2 the state with an acute teacher shortage in math or science,  
3 or both, as identified by the commission in consultation with  
4 the State Department of Education or in a school which has  
5 been designated as a failing school, or any other term adopted  
6 to identify an underperforming school by the State Board of  
7 Education or the Legislature. An additional one thousand  
8 dollars (\$1,000) per year, or five hundred dollars (\$500) per  
9 semester worked, for a maximum of four consecutive years for a  
10 teacher who satisfies all criteria listed in Sections 16-5-54,  
11 16-5-54.1 and 16-5-54.2, and who also is teaching computer  
12 science in a public school in a school system within the state  
13 with an acute teacher shortage in computer science as  
14 identified by the commission in consultation with the State  
15 Department of Education or in a school which has been  
16 designated as a failing school, or any other term adopted to  
17 identify an underperforming school, by the State Board of  
18 Education or the Legislature.

19 "(b) Loan repayment award recipients shall reapply  
20 for the program annually.

21 "(c) Loan repayment awards shall be distributed  
22 directly to the recipient teacher in two disbursements during  
23 the applicable year: One disbursement after January 1 and the  
24 second disbursement after June 1. Each recipient shall provide  
25 documentation from the employing school ~~district~~ system as  
26 proof that he or she has taught for a semester. If the award

1 amount is larger than the outstanding loan balance, the award  
2 amount shall be reduced to the amount of the loan balance.

3 "(d) The requirements of this article are contingent  
4 upon available funding for the program.

5 "(e) The commission shall determine the necessary  
6 procedures for awarding loan repayments if the number of  
7 eligible applicants and recipients exceeds available funding.

8 "(f) The recipient shall notify the commission in  
9 writing of any change in status within 30 days after the  
10 change. Failure to notify the commission of a change in status  
11 shall affect future eligibility. All of the following  
12 constitute a change in status:

13 "(1) A change in name.

14 "(2) A change in residence.

15 "(3) A change in employment status.

16 "(g) To receive a loan repayment check pursuant to  
17 this article, a teacher shall register online with the state  
18 Comptroller.

19 "(h) A loan repayment check is considered income by  
20 the Internal Revenue Service, and recipients shall be made  
21 aware of that fact.

22 "(i) Any funds appropriated to the program shall be  
23 nonreverting.

24 "(j) Additional funds shall be made available to  
25 teachers who also teach math, science, or computer science in  
26 ~~areas~~ school systems of the state where the shortages of math,  
27 science, or computer science teachers, or ~~both~~ any combination

1 of the three, are most severe. The commission, in consultation  
2 with the State Department of Education, shall determine which  
3 school systems in the state have the greatest shortage areas.

4 "(k) A recipient who receives a loan repayment award  
5 and continues to satisfy employment criteria shall continue to  
6 receive an award for the four-year limit regardless of whether  
7 the employing school system retains its acute shortage  
8 designation or the employing school is removed from the  
9 failing school list. If a recipient leaves an acute shortage  
10 system or a failing school, and accepts employment in a school  
11 system or school that does not hold an acute shortage system  
12 or failing school designation, the recipient shall no longer  
13 qualify to receive supplemental funds."

14 Section 2. Sections 16-5-54.1, 16-5-54.2, and  
15 16-5-56 are added to the Code of Alabama 1975, to read as  
16 follow:

17 §16-5-54.1.

18 (a) Beginning in the fall semester of 2020, the  
19 benefits outlined in subsection (a) of Section 16-5-54 shall  
20 apply to the following eligible individuals, pending  
21 authorization to teach in Alabama and subsequent employment in  
22 an Alabama public school:

23 (1) An individual who graduated from a regionally  
24 accredited college or university in Alabama or in another  
25 state who is certified to teach math, science, or computer  
26 science in another state, and who may or may not reside within  
27 Alabama.

1           (2) An individual who resides in another state and  
2 is a graduate of a State Board of Education approved program  
3 in math, science, or computer science, at the baccalaureate or  
4 master's level, after the 2020 spring semester term, from an  
5 approved Alabama institution and who holds an initial  
6 middle-level or secondary professional educator certificate  
7 endorsed in math, science, or computer science that was issued  
8 based upon completion of the approved program in math,  
9 science, or computer science. A teacher who only earns a  
10 passing score on the Praxis test in math, science, or computer  
11 science to add a certificate endorsement for math, science, or  
12 computer science and who has not completed an entire approved  
13 program, does not satisfy this requirement.

14           (b) The individuals listed in subsection (a) shall  
15 also satisfy all of the following criteria:

16           (1) Hold a valid Alabama professional educator  
17 certificate endorsed in middle-level or secondary math,  
18 science, or computer science, or any combination of the three.

19           (2) Teach a schedule in which at least three-fourths  
20 of the full-time teaching load is comprised of math, science,  
21 or computer science courses for which the teacher is properly  
22 certified in an Alabama public school system.

23           (3) Be citizens or lawful permanent residents of the  
24 United States.

25           (4) Have outstanding federal student loans,  
26 subsidized or unsubsidized.

1           (5) Satisfy additional continuing eligibility  
2 criteria established by the commission.

3           (c) In order to receive an additional supplement  
4 pursuant to this article, in addition to the criteria listed  
5 in subsections (a) and (b), a recipient shall also teach math,  
6 science, or computer science courses, or any combination of  
7 the three, for which he or she is properly certified, in a  
8 school system within the state with an acute teacher shortage  
9 in math, science, or computer science, or any combination of  
10 the three, as identified by the commission in consultation  
11 with the State Department of Education or in a school which  
12 has been designated as a failing school, or any other term  
13 subsequently adopted to identify underperforming schools, by  
14 the State Board of Education or the Legislature.

15           §16-5-54.2.

16           Beginning after the 2020 spring semester, an  
17 individual issued an Alabama bachelor's level professional  
18 educator certificate in math, science, or computer science  
19 upon completion of an alternative certification program  
20 pursuant to Section 16-23-3, may be eligible for the program  
21 if he or she satisfies all employment and teaching load  
22 requirements provided in subdivision (3) of subsection (a) of  
23 Section 16-5-54. The individual may only be reimbursed for  
24 tuition and mandatory instructional fees for not more than 12  
25 semester credit hours of the college courses required for  
26 earning an alternative certificate in order to obtain a  
27 professional educator certificate in math, science, or

1 computer science. The individual shall provide the State  
2 Department of Education and the commission with documentation  
3 concerning the cost incurred for the course work. These funds  
4 are considered income by the Internal Revenue Service, and  
5 recipients shall be made aware of that fact.

6 §16-5-56.

7 Any person or institution aggrieved by the actions  
8 of the commission in its administration of the program, by  
9 written petition filed with the commission within 30, days  
10 after notice of the action complained of, may request a  
11 rehearing by the commission. The commission shall schedule the  
12 requested rehearing not less than 20, nor more than 30, days  
13 after receipt of the petition. The aggrieved party may present  
14 written and oral evidence supporting its petition and may be  
15 represented by counsel. The decision of the commission  
16 following the rehearing shall be final.

17 Section 3. This act shall become effective on the  
18 first day of the third month following its passage and  
19 approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.