

HB272 INTRODUCED



1 HB272
2 V8QTPLV-1
3 By Representative Collins
4 RFD: Ways and Means Education
5 First Read: 13-Feb-25



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SYNOPSIS:

Under existing law, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education administers the Alabama Math and Science Teacher Education Program (AMSTEP), which provides a loan repayment award to eligible public K-12 math, science, and computer science teachers and an additional loan repayment award to the eligible applicants who are employed in underserved locations in the state.

This bill would change the name of the program to the Loan Assistance in Support of Educators in Alabama (LASEA) Program and would expand program eligibility to address additional educator shortages by extending eligibility for loan assistance to educators with certification in acute educator shortage programs and providing additional loan assistance if those educators are employed by public K-12 schools or school systems recognized as acute educator shortage locations.

This bill would specify that the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, in consultation with the State Department of Education, would determine which programs, schools, and school systems have acute educator shortages.



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A BILL

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TO BE ENTITLED

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AN ACT

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Relating to the Alabama Math and Science Teacher

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Education Program (AMSTEP); to change the name of the program

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to the Loan Assistance in Support of Educators in Alabama

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(LASEA) Program; to amend Sections 16-5-50, 16-5-51, 16-5-52,

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16-5-53, 16-5-54, 16-5-54.1, 16-5-55, and 16-5-56, Code of

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Alabama 1975; to allow educators who complete a program

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identified as having a shortage of certified educators and who

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obtain certification in those identified programs to qualify

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for the loan assistance program; to offer a supplemental

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payment from the loan assistance program to eligible

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applicants who are also employed in public K-12 schools or

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school systems with a shortage of certified educators as

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determined by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education in

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consultation with the State Department of Education; and to

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repeal Section 16-5-54.2, Code of Alabama 1975, which provides

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providing for the reimbursement of individuals who have

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completed certain alternative certification programs.

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BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

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Section 1. Sections 16-5-50, 16-5-51, 16-5-52, 16-5-53,

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16-5-54, 16-5-54.1, 16-5-55, and 16-5-56 of the Code of

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Alabama 1975, are amended to read as follows:

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"§16-5-50

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The Alabama Math and Science Teacher Education Program



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57 ~~is~~ created pursuant to this article is renamed the Loan
58 Assistance in Support of Educators in Alabama (LASEA)
59 Program."

60 "§16-5-51

61 The purpose of the ~~Alabama Math and Science Teacher~~
62 ~~Education Program~~ Loan Assistance in Support of Educators in
63 Alabama Program is ~~twofold~~ as follows:

64 (1) To encourage individuals to enroll in and complete
65 educator programs ~~leading to~~ identified as having acute
66 educator shortages and obtain Alabama certification in
67 ~~mathematics, science, or computer science~~ those programs.

68 (2) To improve the educational system in Alabama by
69 encouraging those who complete ~~the program~~ and obtain
70 certification in acute educator shortage programs to accept
71 ~~math, science, or computer science teaching~~ educator positions
72 in Alabama public K-12 schools, ~~preferably in public~~ or school
73 systems, including charter schools, ~~where the shortage of~~
74 ~~math, science, or computer science teachers, or any~~
75 ~~combination of the three, is most acute, or in a school that~~
76 ~~has been designated as a failing school, or any other term~~
77 ~~adopted to identify an underperforming school, by the State~~
78 ~~Board of Education or the Legislature~~ that have been
79 identified as acute educator shortage locations. "

80 "§16-5-52

81 For the purposes of this article, the following terms
82 ~~shall~~ have the following meanings:

83 (1) ACUTE EDUCATOR SHORTAGE. A shortage of certified
84 educators in identified educator programs as determined by the



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85 Alabama Commission on Higher Education in consultation with
86 the State Department of Education.

87 (2) ACUTE EDUCATOR SHORTAGE LOCATION. A public K-12
88 school or school system that has been identified as having an
89 acute educator shortage.

90 ~~(1)~~ (3) APPROVED INSTITUTION. A state-supported
91 institution of higher education or a private nonprofit
92 institution of higher education that satisfies all of the
93 following:

94 a. Is accredited by the Southern Association of
95 Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

96 b. Is approved by the State Board of Education to
97 prepare ~~teachers of middle level or secondary math, science,~~
98 ~~or computer science~~ educators in programs identified as having
99 an acute educator shortage.

100 c. Is eligible to receive Title IV federal student aid
101 program funds.

102 ~~d. Maintains its primary headquarters in Alabama.~~

103 (4) BASE SUPPORT. Loan assistance in support of
104 educators who are certified in a program identified as having
105 an acute educator shortage pursuant to Section 16-5-54.

106 ~~(2)~~ (5) CHARTER SCHOOL. A form of public K-12 school. ~~A~~
107 ~~teacher~~ established pursuant to Chapter 6F. An educator
108 employed by a charter school accredited by the Southern
109 Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges is
110 eligible ~~to participate in the program. A teacher~~ for the base
111 support provided in this article. An educator employed by a
112 charter school is not eligible for the ~~acute shortage area~~



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113 ~~supplement~~ supplemental support provided in this article.

114 ~~(3)~~ (6) COMMISSION. The Alabama Commission on Higher
115 Education.

116 (7) EDUCATOR. A full-time employee of a public K-12
117 school or school system whose function is to work with
118 students in support of their efforts to learn and obtain an
119 education.

120 ~~(4)~~ (8) ELIGIBLE APPLICANT. ~~A person~~ An individual who
121 satisfies the criteria set out in this article and is eligible
122 under rules adopted by the commission.

123 ~~(5)~~ (9) PROGRAM. The ~~Alabama Math and Science Teacher~~
124 ~~Education Program~~ Loan Assistance in Support of Educators in
125 Alabama Program created by this article and administered by
126 the commission that provides loan ~~repayments~~ assistance to ~~a~~
127 ~~teacher~~ an educator with a valid Alabama professional educator
128 certificate who is endorsed in ~~math, science, or computer~~
129 ~~science who teaches math, science, or computer science courses~~
130 ~~for which the teacher is properly certified for three-fourths~~
131 ~~of the full-time teaching load in the Alabama public school~~
132 ~~system~~ a program identified as having an acute educator
133 shortage.

134 ~~(6)~~ ~~SCIENCE. Biology, chemistry, physics, and general~~
135 ~~science.~~

136 (10) SUPPLEMENTAL SUPPORT. Loan assistance in support
137 of educators who qualify for base support pursuant to Section
138 16-5-54 and are employed in an acute educator shortage
139 location.

140 ~~(7)~~ (11) YEAR. ~~A school year that shall be divided into~~



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141 The fall and spring semesters. ~~The term does not mean~~
142 ~~calendar, fiscal, or scholastic year~~ of an academic year of a
143 public K-12 school or school system."

144 "§16-5-53

145 (a) The ~~Alabama Math and Science Teacher Education~~
146 ~~Program~~ program shall be administered by the commission, which
147 may adopt ~~any~~ rules necessary for the administration of the
148 program.

149 (b) A percentage of any appropriations received by the
150 program may be expended for its operation and maintenance. Any
151 funds appropriated to the program shall be non-reverting at
152 the end of each fiscal year."

153 "§16-5-54

154 (a) The program shall provide two levels of payment for
155 loan assistance: base support and supplemental support.
156 Depending on eligibility, an eligible applicant may receive
157 the base support or both the base support and supplemental
158 support.

159 (b) To be eligible for the base ~~program of three~~
160 ~~thousand seven hundred fifty dollars (\$3,750) per semester for~~
161 ~~math and science teachers and one thousand five hundred~~
162 ~~dollars (\$1,500) per semester for computer science teachers,~~
163 an support of seven thousand five hundred dollars (\$7,500) per
164 year worked or three thousand seven hundred fifty dollars
165 (\$3,750) per semester, for a maximum of four consecutive
166 years, an eligible applicant shall satisfy all of the
167 following:

168 (1) Is a citizen or a lawful permanent resident of the



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169 United States.

170 (2) Is a resident of Alabama. The commission shall
171 accept any one of the following as proof of residency:

172 a. A current valid Alabama driver license.

173 b. A current valid Alabama vehicle registration.

174 c. A current valid Alabama voter registration card.

175 ~~(1) Be~~ (3) Is a graduate of ~~a State Board of Education~~
176 an approved program ~~in math, science, or computer science,~~ at
177 the baccalaureate or master's level ~~after the 2018 spring~~
178 ~~semester term~~ from an approved ~~Alabama~~ institution and ~~hold an~~
179 ~~initial middle level or secondary professional educator~~
180 ~~certificate endorsed in math, science, or computer science~~
181 ~~that was~~ has been issued an Alabama educator certificate based
182 upon completion of the approved program ~~in math, science, or~~
183 ~~computer science. A teacher identified as having an acute~~
184 educator shortage. An educator who only earns a passing score
185 on the Praxis test ~~in math, science, or computer science~~ to
186 add a certificate endorsement for ~~math, science, or computer~~
187 ~~science,~~ an approved program and ~~who~~ has not completed ~~an~~
188 ~~entire the~~ approved program, does not satisfy this
189 requirement.

190 ~~(2) Holds a valid Alabama professional educator~~
191 ~~certificate endorsed in middle level or secondary math,~~
192 ~~science, or computer science, or any combination of the three.~~

193 ~~(3) Teaches~~

194 (4) Is employed by a public K-12 school or school
195 system.

196 (5) Maintains a schedule in which at least



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197 ~~three-fourths of the full-time teaching load is comprised of~~
198 ~~math, science, or computer science in an Alabama public school~~
199 ~~system~~ workload addresses an acute educator shortage.

200 ~~(4) Is a citizen or a lawful permanent resident of the~~
201 ~~United States.~~

202 ~~(5) Is a resident of Alabama and provides documentation~~
203 ~~proving a permanent connection to the State of Alabama. The~~
204 ~~commission shall accept any one of the following as proof of~~
205 ~~residency:~~

206 ~~a. A current valid Alabama driver license.~~

207 ~~b. A current valid Alabama vehicle registration.~~

208 ~~c. A current valid Alabama voter registration card.~~

209 (6) Has outstanding federal student loans, subsidized
210 or unsubsidized.

211 (7) Satisfies additional continuing eligibility
212 criteria established by the commission.

213 ~~(b) In order to receive an additional supplement~~
214 ~~pursuant to this article, in addition to the criteria listed~~
215 ~~in subsection (a), a recipient shall also teach math, science,~~
216 ~~or computer science, or any combination of the three, in a~~
217 ~~public school system within the state with an acute teacher~~
218 ~~shortage in math, science, or computer science, or any~~
219 ~~combination of the three, for which the teacher is properly~~
220 ~~certified, as identified by the commission in consultation~~
221 ~~with the Alabama State Department of Education or in a school~~
222 ~~that has been designated as a failing school, or any other~~
223 ~~term adopted to identify an underperforming school, by the~~
224 ~~Alabama State Board of Education or the Legislature.~~ (c) To be



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225 eligible for the supplemental support of three thousand
226 dollars (\$3,000) per year worked or one thousand five hundred
227 dollars (\$1,500) per semester worked, for a maximum of four
228 consecutive years, an eligible applicant must meet the
229 criteria listed in subsection (b) and also be employed in an
230 acute educator shortage location."

231 "§16-5-54.1

232 ~~(a)~~ Beginning in the fall semester of 2021, the
233 benefits outlined in ~~subsection (a) of~~ Section 16-5-54 (a) and
234 the criteria outlined in Section 16-5-54(b) and (c) shall also
235 apply to ~~the following~~ eligible individuals, ~~pending~~
236 ~~authorization to teach~~ who are authorized to be educators in
237 Alabama and ~~subsequent employment~~ are subsequently employed in
238 an Alabama public K-12 school or school system, who graduated
239 from a regionally accredited college or university in another
240 state at the baccalaureate or master's level after the 2021
241 spring semester term, and who may or may not reside within
242 Alabama, exempting Section 16-5-54(b) (2)a. through c.

243 ~~(1) An individual who graduated from a regionally~~
244 ~~accredited college or university in Alabama or in another~~
245 ~~state who is certified to teach math, science, or computer~~
246 ~~science in another state, and who may or may not reside within~~
247 ~~Alabama.~~

248 ~~(2) An individual who resides in another state and is a~~
249 ~~graduate of a State Board of Education approved program in~~
250 ~~math, science, or computer science, at the baccalaureate or~~
251 ~~master's level after the 2021 spring semester term from an~~
252 ~~approved Alabama institution and who holds an initial~~



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253 ~~middle-level or secondary professional educator certificate~~
254 ~~endorsed in math, science, or computer science that was issued~~
255 ~~based upon completion of the approved program in math,~~
256 ~~science, or computer science. A teacher who only earns a~~
257 ~~passing score on the Praxis test in math, science, or computer~~
258 ~~science to add a certificate endorsement for math, science, or~~
259 ~~computer science and who has not completed an entire approved~~
260 ~~program, does not satisfy this requirement.~~

261 ~~(b) The individuals listed in subsection (a) shall also~~
262 ~~satisfy all of the following criteria:~~

263 ~~(1) Hold a valid Alabama professional educator~~
264 ~~certificate endorsed in middle-level or secondary math,~~
265 ~~science, or computer science, or any combination of the three.~~

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

270 ~~(3) Be citizens or lawful permanent residents of the~~
271 ~~United States.~~

272 ~~(4) Have outstanding federal student loans, subsidized~~
273 ~~or unsubsidized.~~

274 ~~(5) Satisfy additional continuing eligibility criteria~~
275 ~~established by the commission.~~

276 ~~(c) In order to receive an additional supplement~~
277 ~~pursuant to this article, in addition to the criteria listed~~
278 ~~in subsections (a) and (b), a recipient shall also teach math,~~
279 ~~science, or computer science courses, or any combination of~~
280 ~~the three, for which he or she is properly certified, in a~~



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281 ~~school system within the state with an acute teacher shortage~~
282 ~~in math, science, or computer science, or any combination of~~
283 ~~the three, as identified by the commission in consultation~~
284 ~~with the State Department of Education or in a school that has~~
285 ~~been designated as a failing school, or any other term~~
286 ~~subsequently adopted to identify underperforming schools, by~~
287 ~~the State Board of Education or the Legislature."~~

288 "§16-5-55

289 ~~(a) The program shall be used to provide a loan~~
290 ~~repayment for federal student loans in the following amounts:~~

291 ~~(1)a. Prior to the 2022 fall semester, five thousand~~
292 ~~dollars (\$5,000) per year, or two thousand five hundred~~
293 ~~dollars (\$2,500) per semester worked, for a maximum of four~~
294 ~~consecutive years for a teacher with a valid Alabama~~
295 ~~professional educator certificate endorsed in middle level or~~
296 ~~secondary math or science who graduated from a teacher~~
297 ~~education program at an approved institution after the 2018~~
298 ~~spring semester term and is teaching in an Alabama public~~
299 ~~school.~~

300 ~~b. Three thousand dollars (\$3,000) per year, or one~~
301 ~~thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) per semester worked,~~
302 ~~for a maximum of four consecutive years for a teacher with a~~
303 ~~valid Alabama professional educator certificate endorsed in~~
304 ~~computer science who graduated from a teacher education~~
305 ~~program at an approved institution after the 2021 spring~~
306 ~~semester term and is teaching in an Alabama public school.~~

307 ~~c. Beginning after the 2022 spring semester, seven~~
308 ~~thousand five hundred dollars (\$7,500) per year, or three~~



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309 ~~thousand seven hundred fifty dollars (\$3,750) per semester~~
310 ~~worked, for a maximum of four consecutive years for a teacher~~
311 ~~with a valid Alabama professional educator certificate~~
312 ~~endorsed in middle level or secondary math or science who~~
313 ~~graduated from a teacher education program at an approved~~
314 ~~institution after the 2018 spring semester term and is~~
315 ~~teaching in an Alabama public school. Payments made under this~~
316 ~~paragraph may only be made to eligible teachers who fulfilled~~
317 ~~the per semester requirements for the 2022 fall semester and~~
318 ~~forward.~~

319 ~~(2)a. An additional two thousand five hundred dollars~~
320 ~~(\$2,500) per year, or one thousand two hundred fifty dollars~~
321 ~~(\$1,250) per semester worked, for a maximum of four~~
322 ~~consecutive years for a teacher who satisfies all criteria~~
323 ~~listed in Sections 16-5-54, 16-5-54.1, and 16-5-54.2, and who~~
324 ~~also is teaching math or science in a public school in a~~
325 ~~school system within the state with an acute teacher shortage~~
326 ~~in math or science, or both, as identified by the commission~~
327 ~~in consultation with the Alabama State Department of Education~~
328 ~~or in a school that has been designated as a failing school,~~
329 ~~or any other term adopted to identify an underperforming~~
330 ~~school by the Alabama State Board of Education or the~~
331 ~~Legislature.~~

332 ~~b. An additional one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per~~
333 ~~year, or five hundred dollars (\$500) per semester worked, for~~
334 ~~a maximum of four consecutive years for a teacher who~~
335 ~~satisfies all criteria listed in Sections 16-5-54, 16-5-54.1,~~
336 ~~and 16-5-54.2, and who also is teaching computer science in a~~



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337 ~~public school in a school system within the state with an~~
338 ~~acute teacher shortage in computer science as identified by~~
339 ~~the commission in consultation with the Alabama State~~
340 ~~Department of Education or in a school that has been~~
341 ~~designated as a failing school, or any other term adopted to~~
342 ~~identify an underperforming school, by the Alabama State Board~~
343 ~~of Education or the Legislature.~~

344 ~~(b) Loan repayment award recipients shall reapply for~~
345 ~~the program annually.~~

346 (a) Program funds shall be awarded and distributed by
347 the commission in the following manner:

348 ~~(c) Loan repayment assistance~~ awards shall be
349 distributed directly to ~~the recipient teacher~~ eligible
350 applicants in two disbursements during the applicable year:
351 One disbursement shall be made after January 1 and the second
352 disbursement shall be made after June 1. Each ~~recipient~~
353 eligible applicant shall provide documentation from the
354 employing public K-12 school or school system as proof ~~that he~~
355 ~~or she has taught for a~~ of employment for the requested
356 semester. If the award amount ~~is larger than~~ exceeds the
357 ~~outstanding~~ loan balance, the award amount shall be reduced to
358 ~~the amount of~~ match the loan balance.

359 ~~(d)~~ (b) The requirements of this article are contingent
360 upon available funding for the program.

361 ~~(e)~~ (c) The commission shall determine the necessary
362 procedures for awarding loan ~~repayments~~ assistance if the
363 ~~number of~~ total awards made to eligible applicants ~~and~~
364 ~~recipients~~ exceeds available funding.



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365 ~~(f)~~ (d) The ~~recipient~~ eligible applicant shall notify
366 the commission in writing of any change in status within 30
367 days after the change. Failure to notify the commission of a
368 change in status shall affect future eligibility. All of the
369 following constitute a change in status:

- 370 (1) A change in name.
371 (2) A change in residence.
372 (3) A change in employment status.

373 ~~(g)~~ (e) To receive ~~a loan repayment check~~ assistance
374 pursuant to this article, ~~a teacher~~ an eligible applicant
375 shall register online with the ~~state~~ Comptroller.

376 ~~(h)~~ (f) A loan ~~repayment check~~ assistance award is
377 considered income by the Internal Revenue Service, and
378 ~~recipients~~ eligible applicants shall be made aware of that
379 fact.

380 ~~(i) Any funds appropriated to the program shall be~~
381 ~~nonreverting.~~

382 ~~(j) Additional funds shall be made available to~~
383 ~~teachers who also teach math, science, or computer science in~~
384 ~~school systems of the state where the shortages of math,~~
385 ~~science, or computer science teachers, or any combination of~~
386 ~~the three, are most severe. The commission, in consultation~~
387 ~~with the Alabama State Department of Education, shall~~
388 ~~determine which school systems in the state have the greatest~~
389 ~~shortage areas.~~

390 ~~(k) A recipient who receives a loan repayment award and~~
391 ~~continues to satisfy employment criteria shall continue to~~
392 ~~receive an award for the four-year limit regardless of whether~~



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393 ~~the employing school system retains its acute shortage~~
394 ~~designation or the employing school is removed from the~~
395 ~~failing school list. If a recipient leaves an acute shortage~~
396 ~~system or a failing school and accepts employment in a school~~
397 ~~system or school that does not hold an acute shortage system~~
398 ~~or failing school designation, the recipient shall no longer~~
399 ~~qualify to receive supplemental funds.~~

400 (g) An eligible applicant who receives the base support
401 and continues to satisfy employment criteria shall continue to
402 receive an award for the four-year limit.

403 (h) An eligible applicant who receives the supplemental
404 support and continues to satisfy employment criteria shall
405 continue to receive an award for the four-year limit."

406 "§16-5-56

407 Any ~~person~~ individual or institution ~~aggrieved by not~~
408 satisfied with the actions of the commission in its
409 administration of the program, ~~by~~ may submit a written
410 petition ~~filed with~~ to the commission within 30 days after
411 notice of the action ~~complained of, may request a rehearing by~~
412 ~~the commission.~~ If not satisfied with the response of the
413 commission to the written petition, the individual or
414 institution may request a rehearing within 20 days after the
415 response of the commission is made. The commission shall
416 schedule the ~~requested~~ rehearing ~~not less than 20, nor more~~
417 ~~than 30,~~ within 20 days after receipt of the ~~petition~~
418 rehearing request. The ~~aggrieved party~~ individual or
419 institution may present written and oral evidence supporting
420 ~~its~~ the petition and may be represented by counsel. The



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421 decision of the commission following the rehearing ~~shall be~~ is
422 final."

423 Section 2. Section 16-5-54.2, Code of Alabama 1975,
424 relating to documentation required from educators who received
425 their certifications pursuant to an alternative certification
426 program to receive loan repayments under AMSTEP, is repealed.

427 Section 3. This act shall become effective on August 1,
428 2025.