

HB357 INTRODUCED



1 HB357

2 8XUYF2H-1

3 By Representatives Oliver, Robertson, Wood (R), Lipscomb,
4 Hurst, Gidley, Boyd, Butler, Shaver

5 RFD: State Government

6 First Read: 21-Mar-24



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SYNOPSIS:

The Volunteer Rescue Squad Tuition Reimbursement Program pays tuition on behalf of students who are studying to qualify for emergency medical services personnel licensure from the Alabama Department of Public Health. In exchange for tuition, the students contract with the program to work for at least two years for an ambulance service, a volunteer rescue squad, or a volunteer fire department.

Current law authorizes the member schools of the Alabama Community College System, the Alabama Fire College, and the University of South Alabama to provide the necessary educational program to students and receive tuition reimbursement. This bill would add the Alabama Department of Public Health through its regional agencies of the Office of Emergency Medical Services to the group of participating educational institutions.

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

Relating to emergency medical services personnel



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29 education; to amend Sections 22-18-60, 22-18-61, and 22-18-64,
30 Code of Alabama 1975, as amended by Act 2023-353, 2023 Regular
31 Session; to amend Section 22-18-62, Code of Alabama 1975; to
32 further provide for the Volunteer Rescue Squad Tuition
33 Reimbursement Program by authorizing the Alabama Department of
34 Public Health, through its designated regional agencies of the
35 Office of Emergency Medical Services, to provide education and
36 receive tuition reimbursement under the program.

37 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

38 Section 1. Sections 22-18-60, 22-18-61, and 22-18-64,
39 Code of Alabama 1975, as amended by Act 2023-353, 2023 Regular
40 Session, and Section 22-18-62, Code of Alabama 1975, are
41 amended to read as follows:

42 "§22-18-60

43 For the purposes of this article, the following terms
44 shall have the following meanings:

45 (1) ACCS. The Alabama Community College System.

46 (2) AMBULANCE SERVICE. An ambulance service located in
47 this state which is a member of the Alabama Association of
48 Ambulance Services.

49 (3) ASSOCIATIONS. The Alabama Association of Rescue
50 Squads, the Alabama Association of Volunteer Fire Departments,
51 or the Alabama Association of Ambulance Services.

52 (4) DESIGNATED EMS REGIONAL AGENCIES. The regional
53 agencies of the Office of Emergency Medical Services of the
54 Alabama Department of Public Health which are designated by
55 the department to offer courses to students.

56 (5) ELIGIBLE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION. A member school



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57 of the ACCS, the fire college, the University of South
58 Alabama, or the designated regional EMS agencies.

59 ~~(4)~~ (6) EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE PERSONNEL (EMSP). All
60 recognized levels of personnel licensed by the Alabama
61 Department of Public Health, who have met all primary or
62 renewal educational requirements, or both, set by the Alabama
63 Department of Public Health, and who are allowed to provide
64 medical care within the level of their scope of practice
65 granted by the Office of Emergency Medical Services within the
66 Alabama Department of Public Health.

67 ~~(5)~~ (7) FIRE COLLEGE. The Alabama Fire College.

68 ~~(6)~~ (8) STUDENT. A student enrolled in an emergency
69 medical services certification program at a member institution
70 of the ACCS, the fire college, or the University of South
71 Alabama, or an active volunteer in an ambulance service,
72 volunteer rescue squad, or volunteer fire department who is
73 studying towards EMSP certification by completing courses
74 offered by the designated EMS regional agencies.

75 ~~(7)~~ (9) TUITION COSTS. Includes the actual cost of
76 tuition and fees required to complete an approved
77 ~~course~~ program of instruction for EMSP certification, as
78 determined by each eligible educational institution.

79 ~~(8)~~ (10) VOLUNTEER RESCUE SQUAD. A volunteer rescue
80 squad located in this state ~~and~~ that is a member of the Alabama
81 Association of Rescue Squads.

82 ~~(9)~~ (11) VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT. A volunteer fire
83 department located in this state."

84 "§22-18-61



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85 (a) The ~~ACCS, the fire college, and the University of~~
86 ~~South Alabama~~eligible educational institutions, in
87 consultation with the associations, shall jointly develop and
88 administer a student tuition reimbursement program for
89 students who contract to provide two years of emergency
90 medical services for volunteer rescue squads, volunteer fire
91 departments, or ambulance services after becoming a licensed
92 EMSP.

93 (b) (1) Tuition reimbursement under this article shall
94 cover tuition costs paid by the student or the volunteer
95 rescue squad, volunteer fire department, ambulance service, or
96 association on behalf of the student of which the student is a
97 member. Tuition paid by the volunteer rescue squad, volunteer
98 fire department, ambulance service, or association shall be
99 reimbursed directly to the volunteer rescue squad, volunteer
100 fire department, ambulance service, or association.

101 (2) Tuition reimbursement under this article shall not
102 include any tuition costs covered by grants or other monetary
103 awards provided to a student including, but not limited to,
104 federal education grants and scholarships, as determined by
105 the ACCS.

106 (3) Tuition costs shall not be reimbursed until the
107 student provides ACCS and the associations with documentation
108 that he or she has successfully completed the approved
109 ~~course~~program of instruction, proof of passing the
110 certification exam, production of a valid EMSP license from
111 the Alabama Department of Public Health, and a contractual
112 agreement to comply with the service requirements.



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113 (c) In the event that a tuition reimbursement
114 recipient fails to meet the service requirements for any
115 reason other than extreme hardship as defined within the joint
116 agreement required in Section 22-18-64(b), the individual
117 shall be deemed to have breached the underlying contract and
118 shall be liable in the form of monetary damages to the state
119 for the immediate repayment of the total tuition costs
120 reimbursed, plus interest at the rate of eight percent. The
121 associations shall notify ACCS of recipients who fail to meet
122 the service requirements.

123 (d) Beginning with the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the
124 amount of tuition reimbursement available to students shall be
125 divided among volunteer fire departments, rescue squads, and
126 ambulance services based on available appropriations. The ACCS
127 shall create operational procedures to ensure that funds and
128 volunteer service commitments are split equitably among
129 volunteer fire departments, rescue squads, and ambulance
130 services. Notwithstanding the foregoing, priority shall be
131 given to volunteer fire departments, rescue squads, and
132 nonprofit ambulance services.

133 "§22-18-62

134 ~~Beginning October 1, 2018, the~~The member institutions
135 of the ACCS, the Fire College, ~~and~~ the University of South
136 Alabama, and the designated EMS regional agencies may enter
137 into contracts with new students seeking to obtain
138 certification as an EMSP."

139 "§22-18-64

140 (a) The ACCS shall annually report on the condition and



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141 accomplishments of the tuition reimbursement program to the
142 Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives, President
143 Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Chair of the House Ways and
144 Means Education Committee, the Chair of the Senate Finance and
145 Taxation Education Committee, and the Deputy Director of the
146 Legislative Services Agency, Fiscal Division. The report shall
147 include the number of students participating in the program
148 and the amount of tuition reimbursed for the reporting year.
149 The ~~member~~eligible educational institutions ~~of the ACCS, the~~
150 ~~fire college, and the University of South Alabama~~ shall
151 provide this information to ACCS for inclusion in the annual
152 report. The report shall be submitted by the fifth legislative
153 day of each regular session of the Legislature.

154 (b) The ACCS, ~~the fire college, and the University of~~
155 ~~South Alabama~~ shall enter into a joint agreement with the
156 other eligible educational institutions to implement and
157 administer the tuition reimbursement program, which shall
158 include provisions for ensuring that operational expenses for
159 the program in a fiscal year do not exceed 10 percent of the
160 funding for the program in that fiscal year. The joint
161 agreement shall provide for limiting the acceptance of
162 applications for the program or limiting tuition
163 reimbursements when necessary, or both.

164 (c) Any monies received for the operations of the
165 tuition reimbursement program, including repayments, interest,
166 and penalties paid because of failure to honor service
167 requirements, shall be used to fund tuition reimbursements."

168 Section 2. This act shall become effective on October



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169 1, 2024.