

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 1619

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 4, 2024

The Assembly Education committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 1619 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill establishes the Grow Your Own Teacher Loan Redemption Program in the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA). The purpose of the program is to encourage students who graduated high school from a school district, or lived in a school district for more than five years, with a shortage of teachers to teach in that school district. The amended bill's definition of "school district" includes school districts, charter schools, and renaissance school projects.

Under the amended bill, HESAA is required to offer loan redemption up to \$10,000 of principal and interest of eligible student loan expenses for each full year of employment by the program participant. The total loan redemption amount for a program participant, for five years of employment, is not to exceed \$50,000. HESAA is not to spend more than \$500,000 for program implementation in any State fiscal year.

To be eligible to participate in the program, an applicant is required to: be a resident of the State and maintain domicile in the State during participation in the program; have previously graduated high school in a school district designated by the Department of Education as having a shortage of teachers during the year in which the applicant submits a program application to HESAA or have resided in the jurisdiction in which a school district with a teacher shortage is located for more than five years; be hired as a certified teacher by the school district from which the applicant graduated high school or a school district located in a jurisdiction in which the applicant has resided for more than five years, provided that the district is experiencing a shortage of teachers as determined by the department; and have an outstanding balance on a State or federal student loan and not be in default on any loan.

The bill requires a program participant to enter into a written contract with HESAA to participate in the program. The contract is to specify the duration of the applicant's required employment, which is to be no less than five years, and the total amount of

eligible student loan expenses to be redeemed by the State in return for employment as a teacher in the school district.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2024-2025 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

- provide that a school district, as used in the bill, means and includes a school district, charter school, and renaissance school project;
- clarify in certain portions of the bill that an individual is eligible to participate in the program if the individual is employed by a school district with a shortage of teachers located in the jurisdiction in which the applicant has resided for more than five years; and
- make technical corrections to include gender-neutral language.