

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

1st Session of the 60th Legislature (2025)

SENATE BILL 7

By: Seifried

AS INTRODUCED

An Act relating to higher education; creating the Oklahoma Teacher Recruitment Academy to be administered by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education; providing purpose; defining term; directing the State Department of Education to identify and publish certain list by certain date; providing eligibility criteria; requiring execution of certain agreement; directing assistance amount to be equivalent to certain tuition and fees; prohibiting assistance for certain courses or units; establishing assistance cap for each academic year; allowing funds to be set aside for full commitment; directing assistance to be allocated to certain institution of higher education from certain fund; directing certain benefits to be exhausted first; providing for retention eligibility; requiring repayment of assistance for failure to meet certain agreement; providing for calculation of repayment amount; allowing request for hardship waiver; requiring certain institutions of higher education to develop and promote, in certain coordination, certain public awareness program; directing the State Regents to submit certain report by certain date; providing for contents of report; providing for promulgation of rules; creating the Oklahoma Teacher Recruitment Academy Revolving Fund; specifying source of fund; providing for expenditures; providing purpose of fund; providing for codification; providing an effective date; and declaring an emergency.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

1 SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
2 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 6-305 of Title 70, unless there
3 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

4 A. 1. There is hereby created the Oklahoma Teacher Recruitment
5 Academy to be administered by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher
6 Education to provide tuition and mandatory fee assistance to
7 individuals to earn a bachelor's degree from a teacher preparation
8 program accredited by the Commission for Educational Quality and
9 Accountability if the individuals commit to teach in one of the
10 critical shortage subject areas identified pursuant to paragraph 2
11 of this subsection in a public school in this state.

12 2. For the purposes of this section, "critical shortage subject
13 area" means a subject area identified by the State Department of
14 Education that is in critical need of certified teachers. By July
15 30, 2025, and by July 30 every three (3) years thereafter, the State
16 Department of Education shall identify and publish on its website a
17 list of the top five critical shortage subject areas taking into
18 consideration the results of the educator supply-and-demand study
19 conducted pursuant to Section 6-211 of Title 70 of the Oklahoma
20 Statutes. The eligibility of an individual who has executed an
21 agreement pursuant to subsection C of this section shall not be
22 affected by the removal of a subject area from the Department's list
23 of top five critical shortage subject areas.

1 B. To be eligible to participate in the Oklahoma Teacher
2 Recruitment Academy during the 2025-2026 academic year and
3 thereafter, an individual shall:

4 1. Enroll in an institution of higher education within The
5 Oklahoma State System of Higher Education. An individual may enroll
6 first in a two-year institution and subsequently transfer to a four-
7 year institution to complete the requirements for a degree from an
8 approved teacher preparation program;

9 2. Submit an application on a form prescribed by the Oklahoma
10 State Regents for Higher Education; and

11 3. Execute an agreement pursuant to subsection C of this
12 section.

13 C. An individual who meets the eligibility criteria set forth
14 in subsection B of this section shall execute an agreement stating
15 that he or she shall:

16 1. Agree to earn a bachelor's degree from an approved teacher
17 preparation degree program leading to a standard teaching
18 certificate;

19 2. Agree to meet the requirements of Section 6-187 of Title 70
20 of the Oklahoma Statutes to earn a standard teaching certificate in
21 a critical shortage subject area identified pursuant to subsection A
22 of this section; and

23 3. Agree to teach in a public school in this state in a
24 critical shortage subject area identified pursuant to subsection A

1 of this section. The individual shall be required to teach for one
2 school year in a public school for each academic year the individual
3 received tuition and mandatory fee assistance pursuant to this
4 section.

5 D. 1. Subject to the availability of funding, the amount of
6 assistance shall be equivalent to the amount of tuition and
7 mandatory fees for courses in which the individual enrolls for
8 completion of a bachelor's degree. Assistance shall not be allowed
9 for courses or other postsecondary units taken in excess of the
10 requirements for completion of a bachelor's degree or taken more
11 than five (5) years after the individual's first semester of
12 enrollment in an institution of higher education within The Oklahoma
13 State System of Higher Education.

14 2. The amount of assistance provided to eligible students shall
15 not exceed Ten Million Dollars (\$10,000,000.00) for the 2025-2026
16 academic year and every academic year thereafter. Assistance shall
17 be provided on a first-come, first-served basis and shall be granted
18 without any limitation other than the amount of funds available for
19 the Oklahoma Teacher Recruitment Academy and the number of eligible
20 students who apply. The State Regents may, at the time assistance
21 is provided on behalf of an eligible student, set aside funds in the
22 Oklahoma Teacher Recruitment Academy Revolving Fund created pursuant
23 to Section 2 of this act for the full commitment made to the
24 eligible student.

1 3. Assistance provided pursuant to this subsection shall be
2 allocated to the institution of higher education from the Oklahoma
3 Teacher Recruitment Academy Revolving Fund created pursuant to
4 Section 2 of this act.

5 4. An eligible student seeking tuition and fee assistance
6 pursuant to this section who is eligible for federal education
7 benefits or Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Act benefits shall
8 exhaust all such available benefits first.

9 E. To retain eligibility for the Oklahoma Teacher Recruitment
10 Academy, an individual shall:

11 1. Maintain good academic standing and satisfactory academic
12 progress while enrolled in an institution of higher education
13 according to the institution's standards; and

14 2. After earning a bachelor's degree, submit annual proof of
15 employment with a public school in this state teaching in a critical
16 shortage subject area identified pursuant to subsection A of this
17 section. The proof shall be provided for a number of school years
18 equal to the number of academic years for which the individual
19 received tuition and mandatory fee assistance pursuant to this
20 section. The individual shall not be required to teach at the same
21 school for the number of school years required by this paragraph.

22 F. An individual who has received Oklahoma Teacher Recruitment
23 Academy assistance pursuant to this section and who fails to comply
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1 with the agreement executed pursuant to subsection C of this section
2 shall be required to repay an amount to be calculated as follows:

3 1. Determine the total amount of assistance provided pursuant
4 to the provisions of this section;

5 2. Divide the amount determined in paragraph 1 of this
6 subsection by the number of months assistance was provided; and

7 3. Multiply the amount determined in paragraph 2 of this
8 subsection by the number of months the individual did not fulfill
9 the requirements of the agreement executed pursuant to subsection C
10 of this section. Repayments shall be deposited into the Oklahoma
11 Teacher Recruitment Academy Revolving Fund created pursuant to
12 Section 2 of this act.

13 G. An individual who has received Oklahoma Teacher Recruitment
14 Academy assistance pursuant to this section and who fails to comply
15 with the agreement executed pursuant to subsection C of this section
16 due to hardship circumstances may request a waiver from repayment
17 from the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

18 H. An institution of higher education within The Oklahoma State
19 System of Higher Education that has enrolled students participating
20 in the Oklahoma Teacher Recruitment Academy shall develop and
21 promote, in coordination with surrounding public school districts, a
22 public awareness program to make students and their parents or legal
23 guardians aware of the Oklahoma Teacher Recruitment Academy.

1 I. On or before July 30, 2026, and each year thereafter, the
2 Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall electronically
3 submit a report to the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the
4 Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the chairs
5 of the committees with responsibility over higher education in both
6 houses of the Legislature. The report shall include the following
7 information:

8 1. The number of Oklahoma Teacher Recruitment Academy
9 participants enrolled in each institution of higher education by
10 year of enrollment;

11 2. The number of Oklahoma Teacher Recruitment Academy
12 participants who graduate with a bachelor's degree from an approved
13 teacher preparation program and the critical shortage subject area
14 in which they are teaching in a public school in this state; and

15 3. The number of Oklahoma Teacher Recruitment Academy
16 participants who fail to comply with the agreement executed pursuant
17 to subsection C of this section.

18 J. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education may
19 promulgate rules to implement the provisions of this section.

20 SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
21 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 6-306 of Title 70, unless there
22 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

23 There is hereby created in the State Treasury a revolving fund
24 for the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to be designated

1 the "Oklahoma Teacher Recruitment Academy Revolving Fund". The fund
2 shall be a continuing fund, not subject to fiscal year limitations,
3 and shall consist of all monies received by the State Regents from
4 legislative appropriations provided for the purpose of implementing
5 the Oklahoma Teacher Recruitment Academy created in Section 1 of
6 this act. All monies accruing to the credit of the fund are hereby
7 appropriated and may be budgeted and expended by the State Regents
8 for the purpose provided for in this act. Expenditures from the
9 fund shall be made upon warrants issued by the State Treasurer
10 against claims filed as prescribed by law with the Director of the
11 Office of Management and Enterprise Services for approval and
12 payment.

13 SECTION 3. This act shall become effective July 1, 2025.

14 SECTION 4. It being immediately necessary for the preservation
15 of the public peace, health, or safety, an emergency is hereby
16 declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and
17 be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

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