**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, TO ENACT THE “TEACHERS OF TOMORROW CERTIFICATION ACT” BY ADDING ARTICLE 6 TO CHAPTER 25, TITLE 59 SO AS TO PROVIDE AN ALTERNATE ROUTE TO TEACHER CERTIFICATION FOR PERSONS CERTIFIED BY TEACHERS OF TOMORROW.

Whereas, the South Carolina General Assembly finds that there exists throughout the United States and in the State of South Carolina a shortage of persons certified to teach in the public schools; and

Whereas, research has shown that this shortage of persons certified to teach in the public schools throughout the United States and in South Carolina will be an increasing problem in the coming years; and

Whereas, Proviso 1A.78 of the appropriations act for South Carolina for Fiscal Year 2016 directed the Center for Education Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA) to identify and project the number of additional teachers needed to be certified annually for the public classrooms for grades K through 12; and

Whereas, consistent with previous studies, the results of the recent CERRA report show a projected shortage of 164 teachers for the 2016‑2017 School Year and further show the projected shortage to increase to 888 by the 2021‑2022 School Year; and

Whereas, the South Carolina General Assembly, in recognition of the problem of the shortage of people certified to teach in the public schools of South Carolina, previously authorized alternate means of teacher certification to include the Program of Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE), the American Board of Certification for Teacher Excellence (ABCTE), and Teach for America; and

Whereas, notwithstanding the fact that these three alternate means of certification have produced more than two hundred certified teachers annually, South Carolina faces a continuing and growing shortage of certified teachers for the classrooms of the public schools of South Carolina; and

Whereas, Teachers of Tomorrow has over the past eleven years certified more than forty‑two thousand individuals for the classrooms of the public schools for the State of Texas; and

Where, Teachers of Tomorrow has recently been approved to certify teachers for the public schools in Florida and Nevada; and

Whereas, the certification process presently employed by Teachers of Tomorrow incurs no additional cost to the states in which it currently certifies teachers; and

Whereas, the certification process which will be employed by Teachers of Tomorrow in South Carolina will incur no additional cost to the State of South Carolina; and

Whereas, the South Carolina General Assembly finds that it is prudent and necessary to enact this legislation to address the increasing shortage of persons certified to teach in the public schools. Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. This act must be known and may be cited as the “Teachers of Tomorrow Certification Act”.

SECTION 2. Chapter 25, Title 59 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Article 6

Teachers of Tomorrow Certification Act

Section 59‑25‑610. In addition to individuals certified for employment as school teachers pursuant to Articles 3 and 5 of this chapter, a school district may hire individuals who have received a certificate issued by the Teachers of Tomorrow and who meet the requirements of this article in the content areas of biology, chemistry, English, mathematics, physics, science, and any content area for which certification under the Program of Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE) is authorized. Additional areas of certification may be approved by the State Board of Education upon review of the longitudinal information required in Section 59‑25‑650.

Section 59‑25‑620. A person who has received a certificate from Teachers of Tomorrow must not be hired by a school district in South Carolina without submitting to the State Department of Education, Office of Educator Certification at the time of application a Federal Bureau of Investigation fingerprint card and without having undergone a criminal records check by the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division and a national criminal records check supported by fingerprints and conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation pursuant to Section 59‑25‑115(B) completed within the previous eighteen months.

Section 59‑25‑630. A person who has received a certificate from Teachers of Tomorrow, who has a minimum of a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited college or university or an institution with a teacher education program that has been approved by the State Board of Education for certification purposes, and who has met the requirements of Section 59‑25‑620 is considered to have met the requirements for certification and must be issued an appropriate alternative route certificate as determined by the State Board of Education. The alternative route certificate must be valid for one year and may be renewed annually for two additional years upon the successful completion of teaching and of the hiring district’s induction program.

Section 59‑25‑640. A person who has received a certificate from Teachers of Tomorrow, possesses an alternative route certificate, and has been initially hired by a school district must be required, as a condition for professional certification, to successfully pass the South Carolina adopted pedagogy examination.

Section 59‑25‑650. The State Department of Education shall submit annually by March thirty‑first to the State Board of Education and the General Assembly the total number of individuals employed in South Carolina with a certificate issued by Teachers of Tomorrow by district and nonprivileged information collected on these individuals through the ADEPT reporting system.

Section 59‑25‑660. A person who has completed all requirements of this article and has been hired by a school district has the same responsibilities and rights as other teachers hired by the district.”

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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