**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, TO ENACT THE “HIGHLY QUALIFIED SUBJECT EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION ACT” BY ADDING SECTION 59‑26‑47 SO AS TO PROVIDE A PROFESSIONAL TEACHING CERTIFICATE FOR A PERSON WHO HAS SUBSTANTIAL TEACHING EXPERIENCE IN THE SUBJECT FOR WHICH HE IS SEEKING CERTIFICATION AND IN WHICH HE POSSESSES A DOCTORATE OR OTHER TERMINAL DEGREE; AND TO AMEND SECTION 59‑26‑30, RELATING TO COGNITIVE ASSESSMENTS FOR TEACHERS AND TEACHER CERTIFICATION BY THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION THROUGH THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SO AS TO PROVIDE THE BOARD THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT SHALL AWARD A TEACHING CERTIFICATE TO A PERSON WHO COMPLIES WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR A HIGHLY QUALIFIED SUBJECT EDUCATOR.

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 “Highly Qualified Subject Educator Certification Act”.

SECTION 2. Chapter 26, Title 59 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 59‑26‑47. (A) The purpose of the Highly Qualified Subject Educator Certificate is to provide a professional teaching certificate for a person who has substantial teaching experience in the subject for which he is seeking certification and in which he possess a doctorate or other terminal degree.

(B) A person may qualify for certification as a Highly Qualified Subject Educator if he has:

(1) an earned doctorate or other terminal degree from a regionally accredited college or university in curriculum and instruction, teaching and learning, secondary education, special education, English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics, government, economics, history, geography, and the arts, or a subject closely related to these subjects as considered appropriate by the State Board of Education;

(2) a minimum of five years of full‑time experience teaching in the subject field on the secondary level within the past ten years in education entities including South Carolina charter public schools that elect not to participate in the State Board of Education‑approved process for evaluating teacher performance and effectiveness, state or regionally accredited private and parochial schools, and institutions of higher education that have programs approved for teacher preparation by the State Board of Education; and

(3) successfully completed an annual performance evaluation by the employing educational entity in which he obtained experience required under item (2).

(C) A Highly Qualified Subject Educator Certificate is valid for one academic year from the date of issue and may be renewed once for one additional academic year. The teacher will be eligible for a professional certificate upon his successful completion of a formal evaluation of teacher performance and effectiveness approved by the State Board of Education after a minimum of one year of teaching as a Highly Qualified Subject Educator. A person seeking a professional certificate under this section must not be required to satisfy any additional testing requirements otherwise required for professional certification under this title.

(D) A person seeking certification as a Highly Qualified Subject Educator under this section shall complete an application provided by the department, provide documentation of the education and work requirements of subsection (B), and successfully undergone all criminal background checks and other investigations required for a professional certificate under this title.”

SECTION 3. Section 59‑26‑30(A) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(A) In the area of cognitive assessments for teachers and teacher certification, the State Board of Education, acting through the State Department of Education, shall:

(1) adopt a basic skills examination in reading, writing, and mathematics that is suitable for determining whether students may be admitted fully into an undergraduate teacher education program. The examination must be designed so that results are reported in a form that shall provide colleges, universities, and students with specific information about his strengths and weaknesses. Procedures, test questions, and information from existing examinations must be validated in accordance with current legal requirements. The passing score on the examination shall be set at a level that reflects the degree of competency in the basic skills that, in the judgment of the State Board of Education, a prospective school teacher reasonably is expected to achieve;

(2) adopt nationally recognized teaching examinations that measure the cognitive teaching area competencies desired for initial job assignments in typical elementary and secondary schools in this State. The examinations shall contain a minimum amount of common or general knowledge questions. They shall be designed so that results are reported in a form that provide a student with specific information about the student’s strengths and weaknesses. Procedures, test questions, and information from existing examinations and lists of validated teacher competencies are used to the maximum extent in the development of the examinations. An examination that is completely developed by an organization other than the special project may be considered for use as a whole only if the State Board of Education concludes that the development and maintenance of a specific area test is impractical or would necessitate exorbitant expenses. The examinations must be validated. The teaching examinations must be developed or selected only for those areas in which State Board of Education approved area examinations are not available;

(3) use nationally recognized specific teaching area examinations approved by the State Board of Education for certification purposes. The qualifying scores on the area examinations shall be set at the same level at which they are now set. The State Board of Education shall examine these levels to determine if adjustments are required. Periodic examinations shall be made to assure the validity of qualifying scores. The qualifying scores may be adjusted if new legal requirements or validity studies indicate the adjustments are necessary. In an area in which an area teaching examination approved by the State Board of Education is not available, the state board shall use the teaching examinations developed in accordance with this section for certification purposes as soon as those examinations are prepared, validated, and ready for use;

(4) report the results of the teaching examinations to the student in written form that provides specific information about the student’s strengths and weaknesses. Every effort must be made to report the results of the area examinations and common examinations in written form that provides specific information about the student’s strengths and weaknesses;

(5) report to each teacher training institution in the State the performance of the institution’s graduates on the teaching examinations. The report to the institution must be in a form that assists the institution in further identifying strengths and weaknesses in its teacher training programs;

(6) provide for the security and integrity of the tests that are administered under the certification program as currently provided by the State Department of Education;

(7) award a teaching certificate to a person who successfully completes the scholastic requirements for teaching at an approved college or university and the examination he is required to take for certification purposes;

(8) award a conditional teaching certificate to a person eligible to hold a teaching certificate who does not qualify for full certification under item (7) ~~above~~ provided the person has earned a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university with a major in a certification area for which the board has determined there exists a critical shortage of teachers, and the person has passed the appropriate teaching examination. The board may renew a conditional teaching certificate annually for a maximum of three years, if the holder of the certificate shows satisfactory progress toward completion of a teacher certification program prescribed by the board. In part, satisfactory progress is the progress that the holder of a conditional certificate should complete the requirements for full certification within three years of being conditionally certified;

(9) promulgate regulations and procedures whereby course credits that may be applied to the recertification requirements of all public school teachers are earned in courses that are relevant to the area in which the teacher is recertified~~.~~; and

(10) award a teaching certificate to a person who complies with the requirements for a Highly Qualified Subject Educator pursuant to Section 59‑26‑47.”

SECTION 4. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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