**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING ARTICLE 9 TO CHAPTER 25, TITLE 59 SO AS TO ESTABLISH THE SCHOOL DISTRICT TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PROGRAM UNDER THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, AND TO PROVIDE THAT CERTAIN TEACHERS QUALIFY FOR CERTAIN MONTHLY STIPENDS, STUDENT LOAN PAYMENTS, AND ONE‑TIME PAYMENTS FOR A DOWN PAYMENT ON A HOME.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 25, Title 59 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Article 9

School District Teacher Recruitment and Retention Program

Section 59‑25‑910. (A) There is created the School District Teacher Recruitment and Retention Program under the State Department of Education (department). The purpose of the program is to address teacher shortages in school districts located in Tier III and Tier IV counties with incentives and recruitment and retention tools. For purposes of this section ‘Tier III’ and ‘Tier IV’ have the same meanings as provided in Section 12‑6‑3360.

(B) A certified public school K‑12 teacher who is employed by a school district located in whole or in part in a Tier III or Tier IV county, is entitled to a five hundred dollar stipend each month to be used for living expenses for up to five consecutive years while actively employed by a school district located in a Tier III or Tier IV county.

(C) After three consecutive years of employment with a school district located in whole or in part in a Tier III or Tier IV county, a teacher may apply for a student loan payment of seven thousand five hundred dollars each year for up to three consecutive years in accordance with the guidelines set out by the department. In order to continue to qualify for the loan forgiveness, the teacher shall continue to be employed by a school district located in a Tier III or Tier IV county.

(D) After three consecutive years of employment with a school district located in whole or in part in a Tier III or Tier IV county, a teacher qualifies for a one‑time payment of three thousand five hundred dollars to be used for a down payment on a home.

(E) Each year the General Assembly shall appropriate funds from the general fund, as necessary, to fund the program described in this section.

(F) The department shall promulgate regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of this section. The department also shall establish guidelines and procedures necessary to carry out the provisions of this section and publish those guidelines and procedures on its website.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor and applies to teachers employed by a school district located in a Tier III or Tier IV county regardless of the teacher’s first day of employment.

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