**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 23‑23‑200 SO AS TO PROVIDE CERTAIN LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS QUALIFY FOR STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS, AND TO PROVIDE FOR CERTAIN APPROPRIATIONS TO FUND THIS PROGRAM.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 23, Title 23 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 23‑23‑200. (A) After five consecutive years of employment with the same law enforcement agency, a law enforcement officer initially hired or appointed by the agency after January 1, 2022, who has completed at least sixty credit hours or its equivalent at an accredited South Carolina institution of higher learning prior to becoming employed, may apply for student loan forgiveness in accordance with the guidelines set by the South Carolina Law Enforcement Training Council.

(B) Loan forgiveness may not exceed the lessor of four thousand dollars or twenty percent of an officer’s unpaid balance per year. The maximum loan forgiveness may not exceed twenty thousand dollars over a five‑year period.

(C) Each year the General Assembly shall appropriate funds from the general fund, as necessary, to fund the student loan forgiveness described in this section.

(D) The council shall promulgate regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of this section. The council 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.

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