



HB23-1001 Expanding Assistance For Educator Programs

- Sponsors: Rep. Cathy Kipp (D), Rep. Barbara McLachlan (D); Sen. Rachel Zenzinger (D)
- Effective Date: The bill was signed into law by the Governor and took effect on April 10, 2023.

The bill aims to create additional opportunities for teachers by implementing various measures.

The bill seeks to expand assistance for educator programs by introducing various changes and enhancements. These changes may include expanding eligibility criteria, increasing income thresholds, extending application deadlines, and broadening the scope of programs to include additional positions or locations. The goal is to provide increased support and opportunities for educators, student teachers, and pre-service educators. By expanding these programs, the bill aims to address the needs of educators and improve the overall quality of education.

Overview

The legislation changes the Temporary Educator Loan Forgiveness Program, Educator Test Stipend Program, and Student Educator Stipend Program, all overseen by the Department of Higher Education (DHE). These programs aim to provide assistance and support to new and pre-service educators. The proposed changes seek to enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of these programs.

Temporary Educator Loan Forgiveness Program will undergo several modifications. Firstly, the definition of eligible educators will be expanded to include principals and special services providers. The criteria for educator eligibility will also be modified. Additionally, the program will be extended to encompass educators in any position within Colorado public schools. The application deadline will be extended by one year until July 1, 2023. Moreover, there will be adjustments made to the prioritization of applicants. The requirement for prioritized applicants to work in schools with at least 60 percent at-risk students in FY 2021-22 will be removed. However, priority will still be given to educators teaching in rural schools and content-shortage areas. These changes aim to broaden the scope of the program and provide loan forgiveness opportunities to a broader range of educators.

The stipend programs outlined in the bill undergo several changes as well. Firstly, the income threshold for student eligibility in these programs is raised from 200 percent to 300 percent of the federal Pell-eligible family contribution for FY 2022-23 and FY 2023-24. In subsequent years, the threshold is set at 250 percent.

In the Student Educator Stipend Program, a student teacher can now qualify for a stipend if they engage in student teaching either in Colorado or within 100 miles of the state border. When distributing federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) must prioritize students whose family contribution does not exceed 300 percent of the maximum federal Pell-eligible contribution.

Similarly, in the Educator Test Stipend Program, the CCHE must first consider students whose family contribution does not exceed 300 percent of the maximum federal Pell-eligible contribution when distributing ARPA funds. Additionally, graduates who were placed as student educators before passing the state assessment of professional competencies during 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 fiscal years should also be considered.

These changes aim to increase access and support for students participating in the stipend programs, particularly those with financial need, and ensure a fair distribution of ARPA funds.