

No. 1988-155

AN ACT

HB 2513

Providing for Commonwealth support for an Urban and Rural Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program for Pennsylvania residents who graduate from institutions of higher education and who apply their degrees to teaching in urban and rural public schools in this Commonwealth.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. Short title.

This act shall be known and may be cited as the Urban and Rural Teacher Loan Forgiveness Act.

Section 2. Findings and declaration of intent.

The General Assembly finds and declares that:

(1) The number of college students planning to enter the teaching profession appears to be inadequate to meet the need for teachers in our public schools.

(2) Demand from industry and other opportunities attract existing and potential teachers away from the profession.

(3) The pool of qualified teachers, especially those in math and science, has diminished.

(4) Economically hard-pressed rural and urban school districts find it difficult to attract qualified teachers from the diminished pool.

(5) Payment of a portion of student loans for certified teachers serves the important public purpose of encouraging new teachers to teach in economically hard-pressed areas of this Commonwealth.

Section 3. Definitions.

The following words and phrases when used in this act shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

“Agency.” The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency.

“Designated Commonwealth urban or rural public school district.” An eligible urban or rural public school district which the secretary has certified as having a need for teacher loan forgiveness assistance because of difficulty in attracting qualified teachers.

“Eligible rural public school district.” A public school district that has a population of less than 300 per square mile and either:

(1) more than 8% of the pupils in average daily membership are low-income pupils as defined in section 2502.11 of the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949; or

(2) the market value/income aid ratio, as defined in section 2501 of the Public School Code of 1949, is greater than seven-tenths.

This definition shall also apply to an intermediate unit or area vocational-technical school if the composite data for all participating school districts meet the criteria specified herein.

“Eligible urban public school district.” A public school district that has a population greater than 850 per square mile and either:

- (1) more than 8% of the pupils in average daily membership are low-income pupils as defined in section 2502.11 of the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949; or
- (2) the market value/income aid ratio, as defined in section 2501 of the Public School Code of 1949, is greater than seven-tenths.

The term shall also apply to an intermediate unit or area vocational-technical school if the composite data for all participating school districts meet the criteria specified herein.

“Qualified applicant.” A person who meets all of the following criteria:

- (1) Is certified by the Department of Education to teach.
- (2) Is in the first year of full-time teaching.
- (3) Is teaching at a Commonwealth-designated urban or rural public school district or at a nonprofit nonpublic school in such district at which students may fulfill compulsory attendance requirements.
- (4) Has borrowed through the agency-administered Guaranteed Student Loan Programs.

“Secretary.” The Secretary of Education of the Commonwealth.

Section 4. Urban and Rural Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program.

Qualified applicants who are selected for the Urban and Rural Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program in accordance with this act shall be eligible for payment by the agency of a portion of the debt incurred by the applicant through the agency-administered Guaranteed Student Loan Programs for the education necessary to be certified to teach in Pennsylvania. For each academic year that the applicant is a full-time teacher in an approved Commonwealth urban or rural public school district, the agency may forgive a proportional part of the applicant's loan so that the loan may be entirely forgiven over four years of full-time teaching. No more than \$2,500 shall be forgiven in any year, and no more than \$10,000 shall be forgiven for any applicant. Payments shall be made in accordance with the procedures established by the agency.

Section 5. Loan forgiveness awards.

Recipients of the loan forgiveness awards shall be those teachers who are certified by the Department of Education and who have received a satisfactory rating by the district or nonpublic school for the academic year. Each teacher shall be required to submit such documentation of continued-eligibility as the agency may require.

Section 6. Funding.

Loan forgiveness awards may be made to the extent that funds are appropriated by the General Assembly.

Section 7. Responsibility of agency.

It shall be the responsibility of the agency to administer the Urban and Rural Loan Forgiveness Program established by this act and to adopt such

regulations, policies, procedures and forms as are necessary and not inconsistent with the provisions of this act.

Section 8. Effective date.

This act shall take effect July 1, 1988.

APPROVED—The 16th day of December, A. D. 1988.

ROBERT P. CASEY