

**SENATE FLOOR VERSION**  
February 18, 2026  
**AS AMENDED**

3 SENATE BILL NO. 1546 By: Pugh

5

6 | teachers - program - scholarship amo  
effective date -

emergency ]

0 BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. AMENDATORY 70 O.S. 2021, Section 698.1, as

12 last amended by Section 1, Chapter 249, O.S.L. 2023 (70 O.S. Supp.  
13 2025, Section 698.1), is amended to read as follows:

1 ~~to Teach Program~~ New Educators for Excellence in Teaching and  
2 Education (NEXT-ED) Program. Prospective teachers planning to  
3 pursue an undergraduate teacher education program at an accredited  
4 ~~Oklahoma~~ teacher preparation program in this state shall be  
5 considered if they graduated from high school, completed high-school  
6 level instruction at home, or completed General Educational  
7 Development (GED) test requirements; meet the ~~higher~~ education  
8 admission standards of the institution of higher education; and  
9 declare a pre-education major or major in an approved ~~Oklahoma~~  
10 teacher preparation degree program in this state leading to a  
11 standard teaching certificate.

12 B. To the extent that funds are available, scholarships,  
13 renewable for up to three (3) additional years for qualified  
14 students meeting satisfactory academic progress standards in  
15 completing a teacher preparation degree program leading to a  
16 standard teaching certificate, shall be awarded to cover costs of  
17 tuition, general enrollment and other fees, ~~ether fees~~, books,  
18 materials, and services provided by the institution, including room  
19 and board, in the following manner:

20 1. ~~One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000.00)~~ Two Thousand Dollars  
21 (\$2,000.00) per academic year for up to three (3) academic years for  
22 full-time students who have earned ~~less~~ fewer than ninety (90)  
23 credit hours; and

1       2. ~~Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00)~~ Five Thousand  
2 Dollars (\$5,000.00) for the final academic year for full-time  
3 students who have earned ninety (90) or more credit hours.  
4 The maximum amount of scholarship funds awarded as provided in this  
5 subsection to any qualified student shall not exceed ~~Five Thousand~~  
6 ~~Five Hundred Dollars (\$5,500.00)~~ Eleven Thousand Dollars  
7 (\$11,000.00).

8       C. As used in this section, "full-time student" means:

9       1. An undergraduate student enrolled in twelve (12) or more  
10 semester credits toward teacher education degree requirements;  
11       2. An undergraduate student who is a teacher education major  
12 who is enrolled in or has completed an internship or student  
13 teaching credit hours in order to complete the degree program prior  
14 to certification and who has been approved to take ~~less~~ fewer than  
15 twelve (12) credit hours; or

16       3. An undergraduate student who is a teacher education major  
17 with an approved reasonable accommodation from ~~Student Accessibility~~  
18 ~~Services~~ student accessibility services at the institution due to a  
19 documented disability and who has been approved to take ~~less~~ fewer  
20 than twelve (12) credit hours.

21       D. It is the intent of the ~~Oklahoma~~ Legislature that the  
22 Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education create a committee  
23 composed of educators, teacher educators from the participating  
24 institutions, and representatives of the public schools in this

1 state and the State Department of Education to provide  
2 recommendations to the State Regents to improve effectiveness of the  
3 ~~Inspired to Teach Program~~ NEXT-ED Program. The committee shall  
4 prepare and electronically deliver a report on the program to the  
5 Legislature on or before July 1 of each year.

6 E. Each scholarship participant, prior to entry into the  
7 ~~Inspired to Teach Program~~ NEXT-ED Program, shall have agreed to  
8 teach in ~~an Oklahoma~~ a public prekindergarten through twelfth grade  
9 school in this state for a minimum of five (5) consecutive years  
10 upon graduation and licensure as a teacher. Any scholarship  
11 participant failing to maintain a 2.5 grade point average throughout  
12 matriculation, changing to an ineligible area of study, failing to  
13 meet satisfactory academic progress standards, withdrawing or  
14 otherwise leaving school, or failing to meet requirements for  
15 licensure and certification to teach as established by law shall be  
16 subject to disqualification from the program.

17 F. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education are  
18 authorized to make employment incentive payments pursuant to the  
19 provisions of this section to ~~Inspired to Teach Program~~ NEXT-ED  
20 Program participants who are employed as traditionally certified  
21 teachers in ~~Oklahoma~~ public prekindergarten through twelfth grade  
22 schools in this state following graduation. Incentive payments may  
23 be awarded following each consecutive year of satisfactory service  
24 as documented by the employing school district, up to five (5) years

1 of service for scholarship recipients as provided in subsection A of  
2 this section, upon graduation from an accredited ~~Oklahoma~~ teacher  
3 preparation degree program in this state. The maximum amount of  
4 employment incentive payments for any qualified participant shall be  
5 Four Thousand Dollars (\$4,000.00) per year for up to five (5) years,  
6 not to exceed a total of Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000.00) per  
7 participant.

8 G. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall  
9 require the execution of appropriate contracts with eligible  
10 ~~Inspired to Teach Program~~ NEXT-ED Program participants.

11 Participants failing to comply with the requirements of this section  
12 or failing to provide current contact information shall not be  
13 eligible for the employment incentive payments provided for in this  
14 section. The Chancellor of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher  
15 Education, with the approval of the State Regents, may contract with  
16 any other appropriate organization or unit of government for the  
17 administration of the provisions of this section.

18 H. If sufficient funds are not available for employment  
19 incentive payments to qualified participants during any fiscal year,  
20 the Chancellor may make reductions in the payments made to qualified  
21 participants.

22 I. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education may, at the  
23 time an award is made on behalf of the ~~Inspired to Teach Program~~

1    NEXT-ED Program, set aside funds for the full commitment made to an  
2    eligible student.

3            J. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education may utilize  
4    ~~Inspired to Teach Program~~ NEXT-ED Program designated funds for  
5    administration of the program.

6            SECTION 2. This act shall become effective July 1, 2026.

7            SECTION 3. It being immediately necessary for the preservation  
8    of the public peace, health, or safety, an emergency is hereby  
9    declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and  
10   be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

11   COMMITTEE REPORT BY: COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
12   February 18, 2026 - DO PASS

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