

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
0
1
2
3
4

AS AMENDED

By: Pugh

```
[ teachers - program - scholarship amounts -
effective date -
emergency ]
```

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

SECTION 1. AMENDATORY 70 O.S. 2021, Section 698.1, as last amended by Section 1, Chapter 249, O.S.L. 2023 (70 O.S. Supp. 2025, Section 698.1), is amended to read as follows:

Section 698.1. A. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall establish and maintain an incentive scholarship program and teacher employment incentive program, as funding is available, to encourage the preparation of public school teachers for prekindergarten through twelfth grade, including minority teachers, at all ~~state public higher education~~ institutions of higher education within The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education or private higher education institutions accredited pursuant to Section 4103 of this title and incentivize employment as public school teachers for prekindergarten through twelfth grade in the state for at least five (5) years, to be known as the ~~Inspired~~

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, ~~other 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
24

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~~
24

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
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24