

SENATE, No. 2870

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED SEPTEMBER 14, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator NICHOLAS P. SCUTARI

District 22 (Middlesex, Somerset and Union)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes Education Rescue Grant Program in DOE to support qualified personnel costs of school districts impacted by COVID-19 pandemic.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



S2870 SCUTARI

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1 AN ACT establishing the Education Rescue Grant Program to
2 support the qualified personnel costs of school districts impacted
3 by the COVID-19 pandemic.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*

7
8 1. a. There is established in the Department of Education the
9 Education Rescue Grant Program to support the qualified personnel
10 costs of school districts impacted by the outbreak of the COVID-19
11 pandemic.

12 b. If a school district terminates, or is expected to terminate,
13 the employment of one or more teaching staff members as a result
14 of the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the school
15 district may apply to the Commissioner of Education for an
16 Education Rescue Grant to support the costs of rehiring or retaining
17 the teaching staff member, or if such person is not able to be
18 rehired, the costs of hiring a similarly qualified teaching staff
19 member. The proceeds of each grant shall be dedicated to the
20 salaries, not including fringe benefits or other non-monetary
21 compensation, payable to the teaching staff members by the
22 recipient school district.

23 c. In addition to any other information required by the
24 commissioner, the application submitted by a school district shall
25 include:

26 (1) the number of teaching staff members that would be hired,
27 rehired, or retained through the grant;

28 (2) the position of each teaching staff member who would be
29 hired, rehired, or retained through the grant;

30 (3) the total salaries, not including fringe benefits or other non-
31 monetary compensation, paid to the persons employed in each
32 position set forth in the grant application during the most recent 12
33 months of employment with the school district; and

34 (4) a detailed description of the fiscal condition of the school
35 district, including an explanation of how the financial impact of the
36 COVID-19 pandemic would otherwise necessitate the termination
37 of each teaching staff member.

38 d. (1) A grant shall be awarded in an amount determined by
39 the commissioner, except that the amount shall not exceed the total
40 salaries, not including fringe benefits and other non-monetary
41 compensation, paid to the persons employed in each position set
42 forth in the grant application during the most recent 12 months of
43 employment with the school district.

44 (2) If the commissioner determines that the fiscal condition of
45 an applicant school district does not necessitate the termination of
46 one or more teaching staff members, the commissioner shall reject
47 the grant application or reduce the amount awarded to the school
48 district.

S2870 SCUTARI

1 (3) When awarding grants, the commissioner may give
2 preference to applicants that experienced the greatest fiscal distress
3 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, or applicants that dedicate
4 funding to support the employment of teaching staff members in
5 specific types of positions.

6 e. If the commissioner determines that a recipient school
7 district has used a grant for an unauthorized purpose, or the school
8 district has terminated the employment of a teaching staff member,
9 whose position was funded through the grant, within 12 months of
10 receiving the grant, the commissioner shall require the school
11 district to repay the amount of the grant to the Department of
12 Education according to a repayment schedule established by the
13 commissioner.

14 f. Notwithstanding any provision of P.L.1968, c.410
15 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), or any other law to the contrary, the
16 commissioner may adopt, immediately upon filing with the Office
17 of Administrative Law and no later than the 90th day after the
18 effective date of this act, such rules and regulations as the
19 commissioner deems necessary to implement the provisions of this
20 act, which regulations shall be effective for a period not to exceed
21 12 months. The regulations shall, at a minimum, set forth the
22 requirements for application submissions, the criteria for
23 application selections, and the eligible uses of grant funds. The
24 regulations shall thereafter be amended, adopted, or readopted by
25 the commissioner in accordance with the provisions of P.L.1968,
26 c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.).

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28 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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33 This bill establishes the Education Rescue Grant Program to
34 support the qualified personnel costs of school districts impacted by
35 the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

36 Under the bill, if a school district terminates, or is expected to
37 terminate, the employment of one or more teaching staff members
38 as a result of the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the
39 school district may apply to the Commissioner of Education for an
40 Education Rescue Grant to support the costs of rehiring or retaining
41 the teaching staff member, or if such person is unable to be rehired,
42 the costs of hiring a similarly qualified teaching staff member. The
43 bill requires each grant to be dedicated to the salaries, not including
44 fringe benefits or other non-monetary compensation, paid by the
45 recipient school district to the teaching staff members.

46 In addition to any other information required by the
47 commissioner, the bill requires a school district's grant application
48 to include:

S2870 SCUTARI

1 (1) the number of teaching staff members that would be hired,
2 rehired, or retained through the grant;

3 (2) the position of each teaching staff member who would be
4 hired, rehired, or retained through the grant;

5 (3) the total salaries, not including fringe benefits or other non-
6 monetary compensation, paid to the persons employed in each
7 position set forth in the grant application during the most recent 12
8 months of employment with the school district; and

9 (4) a detailed description of the fiscal condition of the school
10 district, including an explanation of how the financial impacts of
11 the COVID-19 pandemic would otherwise necessitate the
12 termination of each teaching staff member.

13 The bill provides that each grant would be awarded in an amount
14 determined by the commissioner, except that the amount may not
15 exceed the total salaries, not including fringe benefits and other
16 non-monetary compensation, paid to the persons employed in each
17 position set forth in the grant application during the most recent 12
18 months of employment with the school district. However, if the
19 commissioner determines that the fiscal condition of an applicant
20 school district does not necessitate the termination of one or more
21 teaching staff members, the commissioner would be required to
22 reject the grant application or reduce the amount awarded to the
23 school district.

24 When awarding grants, the bill also permits the commissioner to
25 give preference to applicants that experienced the largest fiscal
26 distress as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, or applicants that
27 dedicate funding to support the employment of teaching staff
28 members in specific types of positions.

29 Additionally, if the commissioner determines that a recipient
30 school district has used a grant for an unauthorized purpose, or the
31 school district has terminated the employment of a teaching staff
32 member, whose position was funded through the grant, within 12
33 months of receiving the grant, the bill requires the school district to
34 repay the amount of the grant to the Department of Education
35 according to a repayment schedule established by the
36 commissioner.