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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
55th Legislature, 1st Session, 2021

Bill Number	<u>HB22/aHEC</u>	Sponsor	<u>Garratt/Padilla/Lara/Figueroa</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.218710.3</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>HEC/HSEIC</u>
Short Title	<u>Grow Your Own Teachers Act Scholarships</u>		
Analyst	<u>Canada</u>	Original Date	<u>1/25/21</u>
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FOR THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of HEC Amendment

The House Education Committee Amendment to HB22 (HB22/aHEC) amends Section 22-10A-17.1 of the School Personnel Act to grant educational assistants professional leave to attend a teacher preparation program in New Mexico if they meet certain conditions.

Synopsis of Original Bill

House Bill 22 (HB22) expands eligibility for the Grow Your Own Teachers Act scholarship program to allow public school employees who have worked directly with students for two years to qualify. The bill also expands scholarship program eligibility to allow school employees to qualify if they are authorized to work in the United States. The bill clarifies professional leave for scholarship recipients, which school administrators must provide under existing law, should minimize disruption with the school day and allows public schools to require school employees to make up work hours missed during the school day.

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill does not include an appropriation.

The bill adds fund language to clarify that money in the fund is subject to legislative appropriation.

Since the program was created in 2019, the Legislature has appropriated \$1 million to support this scholarship program. A total of \$500 thousand was appropriated to the HED to be awarded in FY19 and FY20. In FY21, \$500 thousand was appropriated to the Public Education Department (PED) although HED administers the program. PED and HED are currently working on a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Department of Finance and Administration to transfer the money to HED. In lieu of an appropriation in FY21, HED distributed the remaining \$341 thousand left in the fund after awards in FY19 and FY20 to educator preparation programs.

The House Appropriations and Finance Committee Substitute for House Bill 2 (HB2/HAFCS) currently does not include an appropriation to the grow your own teachers fund.

The FY22 executive recommendation included a \$1 million transfer from the public education reform fund to HED for scholarship awards. The Legislative Education Study Committee recommendation included a reauthorized of unexpended funds for FY21 for use in FY22 for the same purpose.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Currently, the Grow Your Own Teachers Act scholarship program supports educational assistants with scholarships of up to \$6,000 per year for up to five years to cover the costs of tuition, fees, books, course supplies, and other educational expenses in pursuit of a teaching license. Of programs that reported, institutions distributed an average of \$3,000 to each scholarship recipient in FY21. To qualify, current law requires a recipient to be an educational assistant who is a U.S. citizen and resident of New Mexico and has worked in a public school for at least two years.

HB22/aHEC expands the scholarship program scope from only including educational assistants to include all school employees who have worked directly with students for two years. The bill allows a school employee to qualify if they are authorized to work in the United States; currently, scholarship recipients must be U.S. citizens.

Educator preparation programs reported identifying eligible students has been a challenge for implementation. Some programs have a hard time finding educational assistants and some programs said high turnover among educational assistants makes it difficult to identify educational assistants who have worked in a public school for two years. Other programs reported confusion around the term “educational assistant” because school districts across the state use different terms for similar positions.

Current law requires public schools to grant scholarship recipients professional leave for college classes, exams, and practice teaching. Educator preparation programs indicated school districts have struggled with allowing scholarship recipients to take professional leave to pursue these opportunities, resulting in a barrier to program participation. The bill requires schools to grant professional leave to scholarship recipients, but allows them to schedule the leave to minimize disruption with the school day. HB22/aHEC allows the public school employer to have the school employee make up hours missed during the school day.

HB22/aHEC also requires public schools to grant professional leave to educational assistants to pursue teacher preparation coursework if they meet the same requirements in the Grow Your Own Teachers Act, except that they do not need to demonstrate financial aid. Some educational assistants who were Grow Your Own Teacher scholarship recipients fell out of eligibility due to their financial situation changing. Once in the teacher pipeline, educational assistants who wanted to continue to pursue teacher education coursework faced a barrier to attaining a teacher license because they were no longer granted professional leave by their employer since they were no longer recipients of the scholarship program.

In conversations with PED, a concern was elevated that the required professional leave may affect school staffing structures. For example, in kindergarten classes of 15 to 20 students, teachers are entitled to the assistance from an educational assistant. For first grade classes, a teacher who has a class of 21 or more students are provided full-time assistance from an educational assistant.

Additionally, teacher preparation programs in New Mexico include a 16-week student teaching requirement. It is unclear if educational assistants would participate in their student teaching in the classroom they are currently an educational assistant in or in a different classroom. If the scholarship recipient teaches in the classroom they are currently working, PED cautions it may not be the most supportive environment to be recognized in a new role. If they participate in a different classroom, it will impact the support they currently provide in their role as an educational assistant. Educational assistants also help provide special education services and this requirement may impact their role in providing these services.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

HB22 requires the Higher Education Department (HED) to collaborate with the PED when HED promulgates rules pursuant to the Grow Your Own Teachers Act. During initial implementation, temporary provisions required the two departments to collaborate on initial rules for the Grow Your Own Teachers Act.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Research on a few “grow your own” programs indicates they have shown success with recruiting and retaining diverse candidates. Some of these programs require participants to promise to work in a public school for a number of years in exchange for financial support. Currently, there is no requirement for Grow Your Own Teachers Act scholarship recipients to work in a public school in exchange for funding. Effectiveness of these programs can be measured by seeing if scholarship participants teach in New Mexico public schools following graduation and how long they stay in the classroom. HED is currently not required to report outcome data to the Legislature on the performance of these programs. Educator preparation programs do not have data on their graduates following graduation; PED is working with programs to reinstate a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to match educator preparation program graduate data with school personnel data. This data exchange would help determine the effectiveness of these scholarship programs in relation to adding more diverse candidates to the educator workforce and program effect on increased educator retention.

The number of students the scholarship program supported across the state has varied. In FY20, 43 students received Grow Your Own Teachers Act scholarships. For FY21, 104 scholarships have been awarded so far. Scholarships are awarded twice a year and HED estimates 150 individuals will receive Grow Your Own Teachers Act scholarships in FY21.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files

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