

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025**

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HOUSE BILL 941

Short Title: Expand & Enhance the Teaching Fellows Program. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Ball, Prather, Johnson-Hostler, and von Haefen (Primary Sponsors).

For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House

April 14, 2025

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO EXPAND AND ENHANCE THE NORTH CAROLINA TEACHING FELLOWS PROGRAM.

Whereas, the pursuit of teaching is the pursuit of excellence, and excellent teachers are not just born, they are developed, equipped, trained, and valued; and

Whereas, all students in North Carolina deserve to be taught by excellent teachers; and

Whereas, the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program has an important legacy in North Carolina, providing the best and brightest students the opportunity to have a place of influence and distinction by elevating them to a vital role – the role of a teacher; and

Whereas, based on the sorely inadequate and regularly declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs and an accelerating teacher turnover rate, North Carolina is facing an overwhelming teacher shortage across the State, especially in rural counties; and

Whereas, the teacher shortage is a growing crisis for our entire educational system as well as the future of our State; and

Whereas, to solve this problem and provide stable, talented, motivated, and excellent teachers in our classrooms, we need to continue to rebuild the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

PART I. REVISE TEACHING FELLOWS PROGRAM

SECTION 1. Part 3 of Article 23 of Chapter 116 of the General Statutes reads as rewritten:

"Part 3. North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program.

"§ 116-209.60. Definitions.

The following definitions apply in this Part:

...

(5a) Qualifying licensure area. – A teacher licensure area in one of the following subjects:

a. Either of the following, as identified pursuant to G.S. 116-209.62(h):

1. Special education.

2. Stem.

b. Elementary education (K-6).

c. Middle Grades Language Arts.



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- 1 d. Middle Grades Social Studies.
 2 e. English (9-12).
 3 f. Social Studies (9-12).
 4 g. History (9-12).

5 ...

6 **"§ 116-209.62. North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program established; administration.**

7 ...

8 (b) Trust Fund. – There is established the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program
 9 Trust Fund to be administered by the Authority, in conjunction with the System Office of The
 10 University of North Carolina. All funds (i) appropriated to, or otherwise received by, the Program
 11 for forgivable loans and other Program purposes, (ii) received as repayment of forgivable loans,
 12 and (iii) earned as interest on these funds shall be placed in the Trust Fund. The purpose of the
 13 Trust Fund is to provide financial assistance to qualified students for completion of teacher
 14 education and licensure programs to ~~fill~~ teach in qualifying licensure areas in the public schools
 15 of the State.

16 (c) Uses of Monies in the Trust Fund. – The monies in the Trust Fund may be used only
 17 for (i) forgivable loans granted under the Program, (ii) administrative costs associated with the
 18 Program, including recruitment and recovery of funds advanced under the Program, (iii)
 19 mentoring and coaching support to forgivable loan recipients, and (iv) extracurricular
 20 enhancement activities of the Program in accordance with the following:

- 21 (1) The Authority shall transfer ~~the greater of six hundred thousand dollars~~
 22 ~~(\$600,000) or ten percent (10%)~~ the following amounts of the available funds
 23 from the Trust Fund to The University of North Carolina System Office at the
 24 beginning of each fiscal ~~year-year~~:

25 a. The greater of six hundred thousand dollars (\$600,000) or ten percent
 26 (10%) for the Program's administrative costs, the salary of the Director
 27 of the Program and other Program staff, expenses of the Commission,
 28 and to provide the Commission with funds to use for the
 29 extracurricular enhancement activities of the Program staff, and
 30 expenses of the Commission.

31 b. The sum of up to six hundred thousand dollars (\$600,000) for
 32 extracurricular enhancement activities of the Program, including (i)
 33 summer programs to maintain year-round connections and (ii) alumni
 34 programs to foster continued engagement after graduation. These
 35 activities should be geared to instilling a strong motivation not only to
 36 remain in teaching but to provide leadership for tomorrow's schools.

37 c. The sum of up to five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) for the
 38 Director of the Program to implement the recruitment activities
 39 identified in subsection (d) of this section.

40 ...

41 (f) Program Selection Criteria. – The Authority shall administer the Program in
 42 cooperation with up to ~~40-14~~ institutions of higher education with approved educator preparation
 43 programs selected by the Commission that represent a diverse selection of both postsecondary
 44 constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina and private postsecondary
 45 institutions operating in the State. The Commission shall adopt stringent standards for selection
 46 of the most effective educator preparation programs, including the following:

- 47 (1) Demonstrates high rates of educator effectiveness on value-added models and
 48 teacher evaluations, including using performance-based, subject-specific
 49 assessment and support systems, such as edTPA or other metrics of evaluating
 50 candidate effectiveness that have predictive validity.

- 1 (2) Demonstrates measurable impact of prior graduates on student learning,
2 including impact of graduates teaching in qualifying licensure areas.
- 3 (3) Demonstrates high rates of graduates passing exams required for teacher
4 licensure.
- 5 (4) Provides curricular and co-curricular enhancements in leadership, facilitates
6 learning for diverse learners, and promotes community engagement,
7 classroom management, and reflection and assessment.
- 8 (5) Requires at least a minor concentration of study in the subject area that the
9 candidate may teach.
- 10 (6) Provides early and frequent internship or practical experiences, including the
11 opportunity for participants to perform practicums in diverse school
12 environments.
- 13 (7) Is approved by the State Board of Education as an educator preparation
14 program.
- 15 (8) For an educator preparation program enrolling loan recipients in a program of
16 study leading to licensure in elementary education (K-6), provides training
17 that is aligned with the Science of Reading in accordance with
18 G.S. 115C-269.20. The Commission shall contract with a third-party entity to
19 biennially evaluate whether a program identified in this subdivision is
20 providing training that is aligned with the Science of Reading.

21 (g) Awards of Forgivable Loans. – The Program shall provide forgivable loans to selected
22 students to be used at up to ~~10-14~~ selected institutions for completion of a program leading to
23 initial teacher licensure as follows:

- 24 (1) North Carolina high school seniors. – Forgivable loans of up to ~~five thousand~~
25 ~~dollars (\$5,000) per semester for up to eight semesters.~~ twelve thousand dollars
26 (\$12,000) per academic year for up to four academic years.
- 27 (2) Students applying for transfer to a selected educator preparation program at
28 an institution of higher education. – Forgivable loans of up to ~~five thousand~~
29 ~~dollars (\$5,000) per semester for up to six semesters.~~ twelve thousand dollars
30 (\$12,000) per academic year for up to four academic years.
- 31 (3) Individuals currently holding a bachelor's degree seeking preparation for
32 teacher licensure. – Forgivable loans of up to ~~five thousand dollars (\$5,000)~~
33 ~~per semester for up to four semesters.~~ twelve thousand dollars (\$12,000) per
34 academic year for up to two academic years.
- 35 (4) Students matriculating at institutions of higher education who are changing to
36 an approved program of study at a selected educator preparation program. –
37 Forgivable loans of up to ~~five thousand dollars (\$5,000) per semester for up~~
38 ~~to four semesters.~~ twelve thousand dollars (\$12,000) per academic year for up
39 to four academic years.

40 Forgivable loans may be used for tuition, fees, room, board, the cost of books, and expenses
41 related to obtaining licensure.

42 ...

43 **"§ 116-209.63. Terms of forgivable loans; receipt and disbursement of funds.**

44 ...

45 (b) Forgiveness. – For every year a qualifying teacher remains a qualifying teacher, the
46 Authority shall forgive the loan amount received over one year of enrollment in an educator
47 preparation program and any interest accrued on that amount.

48 The Authority shall also forgive the loan if it finds that it is impossible for the recipient to
49 work for up to ~~eight~~ four years, within 10 years after completion of the program leading to teacher
50 licensure, at a North Carolina public school because of the death or permanent disability of the
51 recipient. If the recipient repays the forgivable loan by cash payments, all indebtedness shall be

1 repaid within 10 years after completion of the program leading to teacher licensure supported by
2 the forgivable loan. If the recipient completes a program leading to teacher licensure, payment
3 of principal and interest shall begin no later than the first day of September after the completion
4 of the program. Should a recipient present extenuating circumstances, the Authority may extend
5 the period to repay the loan in cash to no more than a total of 12 years."
6

7 **PART II. ADDITIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

8 **SECTION 2.** For the initial selection of the additional four institutions of higher
9 education to be selected by the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission pursuant to
10 G.S. 116-209.62(f), as amended by Part I of this act, to participate in the Program, the
11 Commission shall ensure that the following additional criteria are met:

- 12 (1) Two of the additional four selected institutions shall be constituent institutions
13 of The University of North Carolina and two shall be private postsecondary
14 institutions operating in the State.
- 15 (2) The additional four selected institutions shall reflect a wider statewide
16 geographic diversity than the current participating institutions.
17

18 **PART III. PRIOR TEACHING FELLOWS PROGRAM REVISIONS APPLY** 19 **RETROACTIVELY TO ALL TEACHING FELLOWS**

20 **SECTION 3.(a)** Subsection (c) of Section 8A.4 of S.L. 2023-134 reads as rewritten:

21 "**SECTION 8A.4.(c)** This section applies ~~to applications for the award of funds beginning~~
22 in the 2024-2025 academic year-year for all persons participating in the Program, including
23 teachers who are continuing or entering service repayment beginning in the 2024-2025 academic
24 year."

25 **SECTION 3.(b)** Section 2.14(b) of S.L. 2024-1 reads as rewritten:

26 "**SECTION 2.14.(b)** This section is effective July 1, 2023, and applies ~~to applications for~~
27 the award of funds beginning in the 2024-2025 academic year-year for all persons participating
28 in the Program, including teachers who are continuing or entering service repayment beginning
29 in the 2024-2025 academic year."
30

31 **PART IV. APPROPRIATION**

32 **SECTION 4.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the North Carolina
33 Teaching Fellows Program Trust Fund the sum of ten million dollars (\$10,000,000) in recurring
34 funds for the 2025-2026 fiscal year to revise the NC Teaching Fellows Program in accordance
35 with Part I of this act.
36

37 **PART V. EFFECTIVE DATE**

38 **SECTION 5.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2025. Except as otherwise provided,
39 this act applies beginning with the 2025-2026 academic year.