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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
56th Legislature, 1st Session, 2023

Bill Number	<u>SB307/aSEC</u>	Sponsor	<u>Stewart</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.224139.4SA</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>SEC/SFC</u>
Short Title	<u>Licensed Teacher Prep Affordability</u>		
Analyst	<u>Hoxie</u>	Original Date	<u>2/9/2023</u>
		Last Updated	<u>2/15/2023</u>

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of SEC Amendment

The Senate Education Committee amendment to Senate Bill 307 (SB307/aSEC) adds language clarifying an eligible teacher who is currently a licensed teacher must be seeking a graduate degree in education or related to their teaching specialty in order to be eligible for the Teacher Preparation Affordability Scholarship.

Synopsis of Original Bill

Senate Bill 307 (SB307) amends two sections of the Teacher Preparation Affordability Act. First, SB307 amends Section 21-21O-2 NMSA 1978 to expand eligibility of the Teacher Preparation Affordability scholarship to include a licensed teacher who is pursuing a graduate degree and to provide technical clean-up. Second, SB307 amends Section 21-21O-6 NMSA 1978 to remove the requirement that a student be enrolled at least half time in order to be eligible for the Teacher Preparation Affordability Scholarship.

The bill has an effective date of July 1, 2023.

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill does not contain an appropriation.

LESC and LFC budget recommendations include a \$10 million nonrecurring appropriation from the public education reform fund to the teacher preparation affordability scholarship fund. The LFC higher education budget recommendation includes a \$5 million appropriation from the teacher preparation affordability scholarship fund to the Higher Education Department (HED).

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Teacher Preparation Affordability Act. The Teacher Preparation Affordability Act offers need-based scholarships for students pursuing a teaching degree from a New Mexico public

postsecondary institution. The Teacher Preparation Affordability Act awards scholarships up to \$6,000 per year for up to five years. Eligible students are allowed to use the funds for tuition, fees, books, courses supplies, and living expenses. Current statute defines an “eligible student” as one who is:

- A resident of New Mexico or is eligible for the nondiscrimination waiver;
- Is enrolled at least half-time in a teacher preparation program at an eligible institution and who is pursuing a teaching degree;
- Has not earned appropriate educational credentials to be licensed as a teacher by the public education department; and
- Has demonstrated financial need as determined by the institution.

SB307/aSEC amends these eligibility requirements to include licensed teachers pursuing a graduate degree in education or related to their teaching specialty. Under provisions of the bill, eligible teachers seeking to develop professionally through a graduate degree would have the opportunity to take advantage of the Teacher Preparation Affordability Scholarship. For example, New Mexico State University agency analysis anticipates provisions of the bill could significantly increase enrollment in higher education institutions as many licensed teachers have demonstrated financial need and would be able to take advantage of the Teacher Preparation Affordability Act scholarship.

HED reports the Teacher Preparation Affordability Act scholarship awarded 1,080 scholarships and expended \$3.69 million during FY22. The Teacher Preparation Affordability Act scholarship is based on eligibility criteria, consequently all eligible students are awarded funds. SB307/aSEC eligibility expansion would likely result in HED awarding more scholarships during FY24.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Professional Learning Opportunities. Research from the Learning Policy Institute – a national education research and education policy center – finds supporting high quality teacher professional learning is important to meet the increasingly complex needs of students. The national research finds teacher professional learning should be content focused, promote hands-on-experiences in the classroom, foster collaboration, and implement best practices. Pursuing a graduate degree in education is one option teachers have for professional learning. Under provisions of SB307/aSEC, eligible teachers could be provided a scholarship of up to \$6,000 per year to pursue a graduate degree in education. Additionally, achieving a Master’s degree is one option for advancing licensure from a Level II teaching license to a Level III under New Mexico’s three-tier licensure system.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- Higher Education Department

EH/cf/mb/cf/msb