

SB 217-FN-A - AS INTRODUCED

2023 SESSION

23-1022

04/10

SENATE BILL      ***217-FN-A***

AN ACT            establishing a rural and underserved area educator incentive program for higher education and making an appropriation therefor.

SPONSORS:        Sen. Fenton, Dist 10; Sen. Whitley, Dist 15; Sen. Innis, Dist 7; Sen. Rosenwald, Dist 13; Sen. Soucy, Dist 18; Sen. Perkins Kwoka, Dist 21; Sen. Perkins Kwoka, Dist 21; Sen. Watters, Dist 4; Sen. Chandley, Dist 11; Rep. Cordelli, Carr. 7; Rep. Myler, Merr. 9; Rep. Cornell, Hills. 22; Rep. Wheeler, Hills. 33

COMMITTEE:      Education

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ANALYSIS

     This bill establishes the rural and underserved area educator incentive program and makes an appropriation therefor.

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Explanation:      Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.  
                         Matter removed from current law appears ~~[in brackets and struckthrough.]~~  
                         Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

*In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty Three*

AN ACT                    establishing a rural and underserved area educator incentive program for higher education and making an appropriation therefor.

*Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:*

1            1 New Section; Department of Education; Rural and Underserved Area Educator Incentive  
2 Program. Amend RSA 21-N by inserting after section 8-b the following new section:

3            21-N:8-c Rural and Underserved Area Educator Incentive Program.

4            I. In this section:

5                    (a) "Department" means the department of education.

6                    (b) "Division" means the division of educator support and higher education.

7                    (c) "Commission" means the New Hampshire higher education commission.

8                    (d) "Educational loans" means all loans made pursuant to a federal loan 26 program,  
9 except federal parent loans for undergraduate students (PLUS), as provided in 20 U.S.C. section  
10 1078-2.

11                    (e) "Eligible educational expenses" means any outstanding loans payments made during  
12 the school year.

13                    (f) "Federal loan program" means educational loans authorized by 20 U.S.C. section 1071  
14 et seq., 20 U.S.C. section 1087a et seq., and 20 U.S.C. section 1087aa et seq.

15                    (g) "Rural and underserved area educator" means a full-time, credentialed individual  
16 employed as an instructional or pupil service employee in an eligible public school district or at an  
17 eligible chartered public school.

18                    (h) "Rural school district" means:

19                            (1) There are fewer than 20 enrolled students per square mile within the area  
20 encompassed by the school district's boundaries; or

21                            (2) The regional public health network in which a plurality of the school district's  
22 market value for assessment purposes is located is deemed rural as defined by the department of  
23 health and human services, division of public health.

24            II. The department shall identify specific schools that are affected by critical educator  
25 shortages using the following criteria:

26                    (a) Rural isolation of the school; or

27                    (b) Economic disadvantage of the school based on eligibility for funds pursuant to title I,  
28 part A of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended.

29            III. Rural and underserved area educators who are employed at schools identified in  
30 paragraph II shall be eligible for repayment of all or part of any such educator's outstanding

1 educational loans existing at the time of application in accordance with the eligibility and award  
2 criteria established in this section up to the amount specified in this section, or repayment of eligible  
3 education expenses established by the commission, and in rules adopted by the commission pursuant  
4 to RSA 541-A.

5 IV. Loan repayment assistance or the reimbursement of eligible education expenses may be  
6 provided on behalf of a rural and underserved area educator who:

7 (a) Is employed in a school identified in paragraph II;

8 (b) Has a signed contract with such school; and

9 (c) Has an educational loan that is not in default and that has a minimum unpaid  
10 current balance of at least \$1,000 or has at least \$1,000 in eligible education expenses at the time of  
11 application; or

12 (d) Has eligible education expenses that may be reimbursed pursuant to this section.

13 V. To qualify for loan repayment assistance or education expense reimbursement under this  
14 section, a rural and underserved area educator shall submit an application to the commission. For  
15 loan repayment applications, the application shall include official verification or proof of the  
16 applicant's total unpaid accumulated educational loan debt and any other documentation as required  
17 by the department for verification of the applicant's eligibility.

18 VI. A rural and underserved area educator shall be eligible for loan repayment assistance or  
19 eligible educational expenses for up to 4 years, provided that the educator remains employed at the  
20 same school or by the same school district. The department may remit payment of the loan on behalf  
21 of the rural and underserved area educator in accordance with the requirements of this section and  
22 rules adopted by the commission.

23 VII. The total incentive award shall be:

24 (a) In the amount of \$1,500 for the first year;

25 (b) In the amount of \$2,500 for the second year;

26 (c) In the amount of \$3,500 for the third year; and

27 (d) In the amount of \$4,500 for the fourth year.

28 VIII. The commission shall adopt rules pursuant to RSA 541-A to establish protocols for  
29 determining the number of incentive awards that will be made annually based on available  
30 appropriations for the program.

31 IX. Incentive awards under this section shall be offered to the extent of available funding.

32 2 Rural and Underserved Area Educator Incentive Program; Appropriation. There is hereby  
33 appropriated the sum of \$1,000,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024 and the sum of  
34 \$2,000,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025 to the department of education, division of  
35 educator support and higher education, for the purpose of funding the rural and underserved area  
36 educator incentive program established in RSA 21-N:8-c. All funds appropriated for the program

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1 shall be nonlapsing. The governor is authorized to draw a warrant for said sums out of any money  
2 in the treasury not otherwise appropriated.

3 3 Effective Date.

4 I. Section 2 of this act shall take effect July 1, 2023.

5 II. The remainder of this act shall take effect upon its passage.

LBA  
23-1022  
1/12/23

**SB 217-FN-A- FISCAL NOTE**  
**AS INTRODUCED**

AN ACT                    establishing a rural and underserved educator incentive program for higher education and making an appropriation therefor.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**    ☒ State                    ☐ County                    ☐ Local                    ☐ None

STATE:	Estimated Increase / (Decrease)			
	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
<b>Appropriation</b>	\$0	\$1,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$0
<b>Revenue</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Expenditures</b>	\$0	\$1,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$0
<b>Funding Source:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Highway <input type="checkbox"/> Other			

**METHODOLOGY:**

This bill creates a rural and underserved education incentive program, to be administered by the Department of Education, and appropriates general funds of \$1,000,000 in FY 2024 and \$2,000,000 in FY 2025. The Department has not identified any costs relative to administration of this program and it is assumed all funds will be distributed in the fiscal year appropriated.

**AGENCIES CONTACTED:**

Department of Education