A BILL FOR AN ACT

CONCERNING INCENTIVES TO BECOME A TEACHER IN A RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT OF COLORADO.

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at http://www.leg.state.co.us/billsummaries.)

The bill creates several methods to address the problem of recruitment and retention of teachers in rural school districts of Colorado (rural districts). This includes:

! Establishing one or more rural education centers housed in institutions of higher education in rural districts;

! Providing stipends to offset tuition costs to student teachers.
who are in approved educator preparation programs and who agree to student teach in a rural district;!

Establishing teacher cadet programs in identified rural districts to identify and support high school students interested in pursuing teaching careers in rural districts; and

Providing funds to offset costs for a teacher in a rural district who is pursuing either becoming a national board certified teacher or becoming qualified as a concurrent enrollment teacher in his or her rural district.

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1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2 **SECTION 1.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, add article 75 to title 23 as follows:

3 **ARTICLE 75**

4 **Teachers in Rural Colorado**

5 **23-75-101. Legislative declaration.** (1) THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINDS THAT:

6 (a) TEACHERS HAVE A GREAT IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT. EVIDENCE SHOWS THAT TEACHER QUALITY CAN ACCOUNT FOR THE MAJORITY OF VARIANCES IN STUDENT LEARNING AND TEST SCORES.

7 (b) THE TEACHING AND LEARNING CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH TEACHERS PRACTICE THEIR PROFESSION, THOUGH OFTEN OVERLOOKED, ARE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND TEACHER RETENTION. THESE CONDITIONS MUST BE SYSTEMATICALLY STUDIED AND ADDRESSED FOR COLORADO TO DEVELOP A CRITICAL MASS OF TEACHERS WHO ARE WELL PREPARED TO TEACH AND WHO WILL REMAIN IN HARDEST-TO-STAFF SCHOOLS LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE FOR STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

8 (c) RESEARCH ALSO DEMONSTRATES THAT THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF TEACHER SHORTAGES AND DISTRIBUTION CHALLENGES HAVE A
DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT ON GEOGRAPHIC AREAS OF THE STATE THAT
ARE CLASSIFIED AS "RURAL", LEAVING CHILDREN IN THOSE AREAS MORE
LIKELY TO BE TAUGHT BY FEWER TEACHERS WHO MUST COVER AN
INCREASINGLY LARGER NUMBER OF SUBJECTS.

(2) THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FURTHER FINDS AND DECLARES THAT,
FOR PURPOSES OF SECTION 17 OF ARTICLE IX OF THE STATE CONSTITUTION,
IMPLEMENTATION OF MEASURES DESIGNED TO IMPROVE TEACHER
QUALITY, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION IN THE RURAL AREAS OF
COLORADO THROUGH THIS ARTICLE IS A CRITICAL ELEMENT OF
ACCOUNTABLE EDUCATION REFORM, ACCOUNTABLE PROGRAMS TO MEET
STATE ACADEMIC STANDARDS, AND PERFORMANCE INCENTIVES FOR
TEACHERS AND, THEREFORE, MAY RECEIVE FUNDING FROM THE STATE
EDUCATION FUND CREATED IN SECTION 17 (4) OF ARTICLE IX OF THE
STATE CONSTITUTION.

23-75-102. Definitions. As used in this article, unless the
context otherwise requires:

(1) "Commission" means the Colorado Commission on
higher education created in section 23-1-102.

(2) "Educator preparation program" means an educator
preparation program approved by the Commission pursuant to
section 23-1-121 and that upon completion leads to a
recommendation for licensure by an accepted institution of
higher education in Colorado.

(3) "Institution of higher education" means a public,
private, or proprietary postsecondary institution authorized by
the Commission to offer educator preparation programs.

(4) "Rural school district" means a school district that
THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION HAS DETERMINED TO BE RURAL.

23-75-103. Rural education centers - request for proposals -
reporting requirements. (1) (a) On or before July 1, 2017, the
Department of Higher Education shall establish four rural
education centers to represent four rural regions of the state.
The rural education centers must be based in an institution of
higher education located in the geographic area to be served.
The purpose of the rural education centers is to:

(I) Provide an emphasis on access to teacher preparation
programs that focus on rural education;

(II) Increase rural teacher recruitment;

(III) Develop an educator pipeline to rural districts; and

(IV) Provide support mechanisms for rural districts,
boards of cooperative services, and alternative educator
preparation providers.

(b) On or before September 1, 2016, the Department of
Higher Education, in collaboration with the Department of
Education, the Commission, and interested representatives from
the education community and rural areas of Colorado, shall
develop and release a request for proposals to fund one or more
rural education centers. The request for proposals must
include criteria for selection, timelines, data collection
requirements, and reporting requirements.

(c) On or before January 1, 2017, the Department of Higher
Education shall select one or more institutions of higher
education to house a rural education center for five years,
based on available appropriations. An institution of higher
EDUCATION THAT HAS AN EXISTING RURAL EDUCATION CENTER IS ELIGIBLE TO BE SELECTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR FUNDING PURSUANT TO THIS SECTION.


23-75-104. Student teachers in rural areas - financial incentives. BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2017, THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION SHALL PROVIDE FINANCIAL STIPENDS TO OFFSET TUITION FOR INDIVIDUALS IN APPROVED EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS WHO AGREE TO STUDENT TEACH IN IDENTIFIED RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS. MONEY FOR THE STIPENDS MUST BE ALLOCATED FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO THE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO BE CREDITED TO THE STUDENT'S ACCOUNT.

23-75-105. Teacher cadet program. ON OR BEFORE JULY 1, 2017, THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION SHALL ESTABLISH TEACHER CADET PROGRAMS IN IDENTIFIED RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS. MONEY MAY BE PROVIDED TO LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS OR BOARDS OF COOPERATIVE SERVICES TO IDENTIFY AND SUPPORT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN PURSUING TEACHING CAREERS IN RURAL COLORADO. THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SHALL EVALUATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TEACHER CADET PROGRAM.
PROGRAM EVERY FIVE YEARS.

23-75-106. National board certified teacher stipends - concurrent enrollment stipends. The department of higher education shall provide stipends to offset application fees and evaluation costs for teachers in identified rural school districts to assist those teachers in completing their certification as a nationally board certified teacher. The department of higher education shall also provide stipends to offset tuition costs for teachers in identified rural school districts to become qualified as concurrent enrollment teachers within the rural school district.

SECTION 2. Safety clause. The general assembly hereby finds, determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, and safety.