

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA
ONE HUNDRED NINTH LEGISLATURE
FIRST SESSION

LEGISLATIVE BILL 524

Introduced by Juarez, 5.

Read first time January 21, 2025

Committee: Education

1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to education; to amend sections 79-8,112,
2 79-8,113, 79-8,114, 79-8,115, and 79-1021, Reissue Revised Statutes
3 of Nebraska; to change provisions of and authorize paraeducator
4 grants under the Nebraska Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act; to
5 change provisions relating to eligible uses of the Education Future
6 Fund; to harmonize provisions; to repeal the original sections; and
7 to declare an emergency.
8 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

1 **Section 1.** Section 79-8,112, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska,
2 is amended to read:

3 79-8,112 The purpose of the Nebraska Teacher Recruitment and
4 Retention Act is to provide financial incentives to recruit and retain
5 teachers and paraeducators in Nebraska classrooms.

6 **Sec. 2.** Section 79-8,113, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is
7 amended to read:

8 79-8,113 For purposes of the Nebraska Teacher Recruitment and
9 Retention Act:

10 (1) Department means the State Department of Education;

11 (2) Grant means a grant for ~~teacher~~ recruitment and retention
12 payments under the Nebraska Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act; ~~and~~

13 (3) Paraeducator means an individual who is employed by a school in
14 Nebraska to provide instructional support and noninstructional services
15 to students and teachers in schools but who is not required to hold a
16 certificate to teach; and

17 (4) (3) Teacher means a person who holds a valid certificate to
18 teach in Nebraska issued by the Commissioner of Education and is employed
19 in Nebraska for the instruction of students in elementary or high school
20 grades.

21 **Sec. 3.** Section 79-8,114, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is
22 amended to read:

23 79-8,114 (1) A teacher or paraeducator is eligible to receive a
24 grant as prescribed in this section ~~may apply to the department for a~~
25 ~~grant.~~ The department shall not prioritize a grant based upon the school
26 where the teacher or paraeducator is employed ~~applicant teaches.~~ The
27 department shall distribute all grants automatically to the school
28 district employing the eligible teacher or paraeducator. The school
29 district shall distribute such grant funds to the teacher or paraeducator
30 in accordance with this section.

31 (2) A teacher is eligible to receive ~~apply for:~~

1 (a) A retention one grant of two thousand five hundred dollars if
2 the teacher has signed a contract to complete such teacher's second
3 complete school year of full-time employment as a teacher at a Nebraska
4 school in school year 2023-24, 2024-25, 2025-26, or 2026-27;

5 (b) A retention two grant of two thousand five hundred dollars if
6 the teacher has signed a contract to complete such teacher's fourth
7 complete school year of full-time employment as a teacher at a Nebraska
8 school in school year 2023-24, 2024-25, 2025-26, or 2026-27;

9 (c) A retention three grant of two thousand five hundred dollars if
10 the teacher has signed a contract to complete such teacher's sixth
11 complete school year of full-time employment as a teacher at a Nebraska
12 school in school year 2023-24, 2024-25, 2025-26, or 2026-27; and

13 (d)(i) A high-need retention grant of five thousand dollars if on or
14 after June 2, 2023, a teacher:

15 (A) Obtains an endorsement in special education, mathematics,
16 science, technology, or dual credit; and

17 (B)(I) For an application submitted prior to April 17, 2024, signs a
18 contract to complete a school year of full-time employment as a teacher
19 at a Nebraska school in school year 2024-25, 2025-26, or 2026-27; or

20 (II) For an application submitted on or after April 17, 2024, signs
21 a contract to complete a school year of full-time employment as a teacher
22 to teach in such endorsement area at a Nebraska school in school year
23 2024-25, 2025-26, or 2026-27.

24 (ii) A teacher shall only be eligible to receive one high-need
25 retention grant.

26 (3) A paraeducator is eligible to receive:

27 (a) A retention grant of one thousand dollars if such paraeducator
28 signs a contract to work as a paraeducator and works on average twenty-
29 eight hours or more per week during the school year in school year
30 2025-26 or 2026-27; and

31 (b) A retention grant in an amount proportional to the grant

1 provided in subdivision (a) of this subsection based on the actual number
2 of hours worked if such paraeducator signs a contract to work as a
3 paraeducator and works on average less than twenty-eight hours per week
4 during the school year in school year 2025-26 or 2026-27.

5 **Sec. 4.** Section 79-8,115, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is
6 amended to read:

7 79-8,115 It is the intent of the Legislature to encourage individual
8 schools and school districts to adopt policies incentivizing teacher and
9 paraeducator recruitment and retention through policies similar to the
10 Nebraska Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act. Teachers and
11 paraeducators at schools not adopting a recruitment and retention policy
12 shall not be prohibited from receiving a grant under the Nebraska Teacher
13 Recruitment and Retention Act.

14 **Sec. 5.** Section 79-1021, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is
15 amended to read:

16 79-1021 (1) The Education Future Fund is created. The fund shall be
17 administered by the department and shall consist of money transferred to
18 the fund by the Legislature. Transfers may be made from the Education
19 Future Fund to the Computer Science and Technology Education Fund at the
20 direction of the Legislature. Any money in the Education Future Fund
21 available for investment shall be invested by the state investment
22 officer pursuant to the Nebraska Capital Expansion Act and the Nebraska
23 State Funds Investment Act.

24 (2) The fund shall be used only for the following purposes, in order
25 of priority:

26 (a) To fully fund equalization aid under the Tax Equity and
27 Educational Opportunities Support Act;

28 (b) To fund reimbursements related to special education under
29 section 79-1142;

30 (c) To fund foundation aid under the Tax Equity and Educational
31 Opportunities Support Act;

1 (d) To increase funding for school districts in a way that results
2 in direct property tax relief, which means a dollar-for-dollar
3 replacement of property taxes by a state funding source;

4 (e) To provide funding for a grant program created by the
5 Legislature to address teacher and paraeducator turnover rates and keep
6 existing teachers and paraeducators in classrooms;

7 (f) To provide funding to increase career and technical educational
8 classroom opportunities for students, including, but not limited to,
9 computer science education. Such funding must provide students with the
10 academic and technical skills, knowledge, and training necessary to
11 succeed in future careers;

12 (g) To provide funding for a grant program created by the
13 Legislature to provide students the opportunity to have a mentor who will
14 continuously engage with the student directly to aid in the student's
15 professional growth and give ongoing support and encouragement to the
16 student;

17 (h) To provide funding for extraordinary increases in special
18 education expenditures to allow school districts with large, unexpected
19 special education expenditures to more easily meet the needs of all
20 students;

21 (i) To provide funding to help recruit teachers throughout the state
22 by utilizing apprenticeships through a teacher apprenticeship program and
23 an alternative certification process;

24 (j) To provide funding to develop and implement a professional
25 learning system to help provide sustained professional learning and
26 training regarding evidence-based reading instruction and for a grant
27 program relating to dyslexia research; and

28 (k) To provide funding for a pilot project administered by the State
29 Department of Education to provide menstrual products to school
30 districts.

31 (3)(a) The State Treasurer shall transfer one billion dollars from

1 the General Fund to the Education Future Fund in fiscal year 2023-24, on
2 such dates and in such amounts as directed by the budget administrator of
3 the budget division of the Department of Administrative Services.

4 (b) The State Treasurer shall transfer two hundred fifty million
5 dollars from the General Fund to the Education Future Fund in fiscal year
6 2024-25, on such dates and in such amounts as directed by the budget
7 administrator of the budget division of the Department of Administrative
8 Services.

9 (c) It is the intent of the Legislature that two hundred fifty
10 million dollars be transferred from the General Fund to the Education
11 Future Fund in fiscal year 2025-26 and each fiscal year thereafter.

12 **Sec. 6.** Original sections 79-8,112, 79-8,113, 79-8,114, 79-8,115,
13 and 79-1021, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, are repealed.

14 **Sec. 7.** Since an emergency exists, this act takes effect when
15 passed and approved according to law.