A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that approximately ten per cent of the State's teachers switch schools, relocate, or leave the profession each year. Only fifty to sixty per cent of current teachers have been at their school for five years or more. Chronic teacher turnover forces the department of education to rely on emergency hires and substitute teachers to fill vacancies.

The legislature further finds that teacher recruitment and retention is especially difficult for poor and hard-to-staff communities. Equitable Access to Excellent Educators, a report published by the United States Department of Education in 2015, found that an average of 14.48 per cent of teachers in low-poverty schools are inexperienced, unqualified, or teaching outside of their field of expertise. In high-poverty schools, however, an average of 21.48 per cent of teachers are inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field.
The legislature additionally finds that Hawaii's high cost of living is a significant contributing factor in the department of education's teacher recruitment and retention efforts. According to a WalletHub study, the State ranked fifty-first out of fifty states and the District of Columbia for starting teacher salary and median teacher salary adjusted for cost of living.

The purpose of this Act is to improve teacher recruitment and retention by establishing a teacher home assistance program to provide housing vouchers to qualified full-time and half-time teachers who are employed by the department of education and teach at a hard-to-fill school, as determined by the department of education, including public charter schools.

SECTION 2. Chapter 201H, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to part II to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

"§201H- Teacher home assistance program. (a) There is established a teacher home assistance program to be administered by the corporation to provide housing vouchers to eligible teachers. Housing vouchers shall be provided to eligible teachers on a first-come, first-served basis."
(b) A housing voucher provided under this section shall be used for:

1. Rent for the eligible teacher's primary residence;
2. Mortgage payments for the eligible teacher's primary residence; or
3. Down payment on residential real property; provided that the property shall be the eligible teacher's primary residence.

(c) A housing voucher shall not exceed $500 per month or the eligible teacher's monthly rent or mortgage payment, whichever is less. A housing voucher granted pursuant to this section shall be applicable for one year. The voucher shall be renewable for one additional year.

(d) Upon the establishment of the teacher home assistance program, the corporation shall develop an application procedure and processes, procedures, and forms necessary to implement and maintain the program. The corporation shall also work with the department of education and state public charter school commission to develop a process to verify that a housing voucher applicant satisfies the criteria listed in subsection (f).
(e) The corporation may adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91 to effectuate the purpose of this section.

(f) For the purposes of this section, an "eligible teacher" means a person who:

1. Is a full-time or half-time teacher;
2. Is employed by the department of education;
3. Commits to teach at a hard-to-fill school, including a public charter school, as determined by the department of education, for no less than five consecutive years;
4. Resides in this State; and
5. Does not own, operate, rent, or control any residential real property in addition to the eligible teacher's primary residence for which the housing voucher is sought."

SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of $ or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2019-2020 and the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2020-2021 for the provision of housing vouchers through the teacher home assistance program established by this Act.
The sums appropriated shall be expended by the Hawaii housing finance and development corporation for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2019.
Report Title:
Teacher Home Assistance Program; Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation; Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Description:
Establishes the Teacher Home Assistance Program to be administered by the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation to provide housing vouchers to certain teachers who are employed by the Department of Education and commit to teach at hard-to-fill schools and charter schools for no less than five years.

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