A BILL FOR AN ACT

CONCERNING PROVIDING FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR EDUCATORS TO WORK IN RURAL AREAS.

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://leg.colorado.gov.)

Current law allows the department of higher education to provide up to 20 financial stipends annually, not to exceed $6,000 each, to teachers in rural schools or school districts (rural schools) who are seeking certification as a national board certified teacher, seeking certification as a concurrent enrollment teacher, or furthering their professional development plan through continuing education, and who
commit to employment in a rural school for a minimum of 3 years. The bill increases the number of available stipends to 60 and expands it to include teachers completing an approved alternative licensure program leading to initial licensure and full-time employment in a rural school or board of cooperative services that serves rural schools and individuals completing the required course work leading to certification as a special services provider and employment in a rural school or a board of cooperative services that serves rural schools.

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

SECTION 1. In Colorado Revised Statutes, amend 23-76-101 as follows:

23-76-101. Legislative declaration. (1) The general assembly finds that:

(a) Teachers have a great impact on student achievement. Evidence shows that the quality of teachers can account for the majority of variances in student learning and test scores.

(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.

(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". As a result, children in those rural areas are more likely to be taught by fewer teachers who must cover an increasingly larger number of subjects and
HAVE LIMITED ACCESS TO THE CRITICAL SUPPORT SERVICES OFFERED BY SPECIAL SERVICES PROVIDERS.

(d) APPROVED ALTERNATIVE TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS ARE CRITICAL FOR FILLING TEACHER SHORTAGES IN RURAL SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS ACROSS COLORADO. RURAL SCHOOL LEADERS ARE ABLE TO PLACE QUALIFIED TEACHER CANDIDATES, INCLUDING MEMBERS OF THEIR OWN COMMUNITIES, IN CLASSROOMS THROUGH THESE ALTERNATIVE TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS. SUCH PROGRAMS PROVIDE THE NECESSARY SUPPORT AND COACHING TO AN INDIVIDUAL DURING HIS OR HER YEAR-LONG TRAINING AND ALLOW ALTERNATIVE TEACHER CANDIDATES TO EARN INITIAL TEACHER LICENSURE WHILE SERVING IN CLASSROOMS. BY HELPING TO FILL IMMEDIATE NEEDS IN HARD-TO-STAFF RURAL SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS, AND BY RECEIVING THE NECESSARY TRAINING, ALTERNATIVE TEACHER CANDIDATES ARE ABLE TO CREATE A POSITIVE, LONGITUDINAL IMPACT ON STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

(e) SINCE THE BEGINNING OF ALTERNATIVE TEACHER PREPARATION PATHWAYS IN COLORADO, THE NUMBER OF ALTERNATIVE TEACHER CANDIDATES HAS INCREASED STEADILY, WITH ONE OUT OF EVERY FOUR ALTERNATIVE TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM.

(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 the quality, recruitment, and retention of TEACHERS AND SPECIAL SERVICES PROVIDERS in the rural areas of Colorado through this ARTICLE 76 is a critical element of accountable education reform, accountable
programs to meet state academic standards, and performance incentives for teachers AND SPECIAL SERVICES PROVIDERS and, therefore, may receive funding from the state education fund created in section 17 (4) of article IX of the state constitution.

SECTION 2. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 23-76-102, amend the introductory portion; and add (5) as follows:

23-76-102. Definitions. As used in this article ARTICLE 76, unless the context otherwise requires:

(5) "SPECIAL SERVICES PROVIDER" MEANS ANY PERSON OTHER THAN A TEACHER, PRINCIPAL, OR ADMINISTRATOR WHO IS EMPLOYED BY ANY SCHOOL DISTRICT OR BOARD OF COOPERATIVE SERVICES TO PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES TO STUDENTS IN DIRECT SUPPORT OF THE EDUCATION INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM.

SECTION 3. In Colorado Revised Statutes, amend 23-76-106 as follows:

23-76-106. National board certified teacher stipends - concurrent enrollment stipends - special service providers stipends. (1) The department of higher education shall annually provide up to twenty SIXTY financial stipends, not to exceed six thousand dollars each, to any:

(a) Teacher in a rural school or school district who is seeking certification as a national board certified teacher;

(b) TEACHER IN A RURAL SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT WHO IS seeking certification as a concurrent enrollment teacher or is a teacher furthering his or her professional development plan through continuing education: AND WHO NEEDS ADDITIONAL COURSE WORK OR CREDENTIALS TO OBTAIN SUCH CERTIFICATION;
(c) Teacher completing an alternative licensure program approved by the Department of Education pursuant to Article 60.5 of Title 22 that leads to initial licensure in the State of Colorado and full-time employment as a teacher in a rural school or school district or a Board of Cooperative Services that serves rural schools or school districts; or

(d) Individual seeking to complete the required course work leading to certification as a Special Services Provider and employment in a rural school or school district or a Board of Cooperative Services that serves rural schools or school districts.

(2) The stipends may be used to offset application fees, evaluation costs, tuition costs, and any additional costs associated with continuing education that are obtaining initial licensure or in support of a teacher's or Special Services Provider's professional development plan.

(3) The financial stipends awarded should, to the extent practicable, include persons with disabilities and take into consideration the geographic, racial, and ethnic diversity of the state.

(4) A teacher or a Special Services Provider who receives a stipend pursuant to this section must commit to teach for a total of three years. in his or her rural school or school district.

SECTION 4. Act subject to petition - effective date. This act takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the
ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly (August 8, 2018, if adjournment sine die is on May 9, 2018); except that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in November 2018 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.