

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2021

H.B. 749
Apr 29, 2021
HOUSE PRINCIPAL CLERK

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HOUSE BILL DRH30355-MTa-130

Short Title: Healthy Students - School Psychs/COVID-19. (Public)

Sponsors: Representative Ball.

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF
3 SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

4 Whereas, social-emotional support provided by school psychologists can enhance
5 students' ability to succeed in school and in the community; and

6 Whereas, as schools return to in-person learning amid the coronavirus disease 2019
7 pandemic, school psychologists are equipped to professionally address the accompanying
8 increased demand for school mental health services; and

9 Whereas, North Carolina has 780 school psychologists serving one million five
10 hundred thousand public school students; and

11 Whereas, North Carolina's ratio of school psychologists to students is currently 1
12 school psychologist for every 1,943 students, and the nationally recommended ratio of school
13 psychologists to students is 1 school psychologist for every 500 students; and

14 Whereas, North Carolina's top State-funded school psychologist salary is \$14,180
15 below the national median salary, making it extraordinarily challenging to recruit and retain
16 school psychologists; and

17 Whereas, it is a top priority of the General Assembly to respond to the increased need
18 for social-emotional support among North Carolina's public school students in these challenging
19 times; Now, therefore,

20 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

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22 **PART I. COMPENSATION INCREASES FOR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS**

23 **SECTION 1.(a)** For the 2021-2022 fiscal year, in addition to the salary provided in
24 accordance with the "A" Teachers Salary Schedule, school psychologists shall receive ten
25 thousand dollars (\$10,000) per year, paid in monthly amounts.

26 **SECTION 1.(b)** For the 2021-2022 fiscal year, school psychologists who have
27 Nationally Certified School Psychologists (NCSP) certification shall receive a salary supplement
28 each month of twelve percent (12%) of their monthly salary on the "A" Teachers Salary Schedule,
29 as modified pursuant to subsection (a) of this section.

30 **SECTION 1.(c)** For purposes of this section, the term "school psychologists" shall
31 refer to licensed personnel of the public schools who are classified as school psychologists.

32 **SECTION 1.(d)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
33 Public Instruction for the 2021-2022 fiscal year the sum of fourteen million six hundred
34 sixty-four dollars (\$14,000,664) in recurring funds to provide compensation increases for school
35 psychologists pursuant to this section.

36 **SECTION 1.(e)** This section becomes effective July 1, 2021.



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2 **PART II. SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**
3 **PROGRAM**

4 **SECTION 2.(a)** Article 21 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by
5 adding the following new section to read:

6 **"§ 115C-318.1. School psychologists recruitment and retention program.**

7 (a) Program; Purpose. – The State Board of Education shall establish the School
8 Psychologists Recruitment and Retention Program (Program). The purpose of the Program is to
9 recruit high-quality school psychologists to identified public school units and retain high-quality
10 school psychologists in identified public school units by providing signing and retention bonuses
11 to select school psychologists.

12 (b) Definitions. – For purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:

13 (1) Identified public school unit. – Any of the following:

14 a. A local school administrative unit.

15 b. A charter school.

16 c. A regional school.

17 d. A school providing elementary or secondary instruction operated by
18 one of the following:

19 1. The State Board of Education, including schools operated
20 under Article 7A and Article 9C of this Chapter.

21 2. The University of North Carolina, including schools operated
22 under Articles 4, 29, and 29A of Chapter 116 of the General
23 Statutes.

24 3. The Department of Health and Human Services.

25 4. The Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice of the
26 Department of Public Safety.

27 (2) Recruitment and retention coordinator. – The person at the Department of
28 Public Instruction, under the direct supervision of the Superintendent of Public
29 Instruction, who is responsible for administering the Program.

30 (c) Implementation. – The recruitment and retention coordinator shall coordinate with
31 identified public school units to allocate any funds appropriated for the Program, subject to the
32 following requirements:

33 (1) Bonuses shall be conditioned on the existence of an agreement between the
34 identified public school units and the school psychologist that is (i) approved
35 by the recruitment and retention coordinator and (ii) at a minimum, includes
36 the following provisions:

37 a. The school psychologist agrees to remain employed in the identified
38 public school unit as a school psychologist for three to five years, as
39 negotiated by the parties.

40 b. The school psychologist agrees to return bonus funds to the
41 Department of Public Instruction on a prorated basis if all of the
42 following criteria are met:

43 1. The school psychologist does not remain employed in the
44 identified public school unit as a school psychologist for the
45 agreed upon period of time.

46 2. The school psychologist has not been terminated due to death,
47 a reduction in force, or disability that prohibits him or her from
48 carrying out the essential functions of the job.

49 (2) No individual bonus shall be greater than ten thousand dollars (\$10,000).

(3) In determining how to allocate funds for the Program, the recruitment and retention coordinator shall consider the unique factors of each identified public school unit, including all of the following:

- a. The level of resources available to the identified public school unit that would receive the funds.
- b. The overall impact on student mental health in the identified public school unit if the funds are provided.
- c. The history of difficulty in recruiting or retaining school psychologists at the identified public school unit.
- d. The likelihood of success in recruiting or retaining school psychologists at the identified public school unit without a bonus.

(4) The recruitment and retention coordinator shall not provide any funds to an identified public school unit unless the unit agrees that the funds will be used to supplement, and not supplant, local funds for school psychologists.

(5) Except as provided in this section, the recruitment and retention coordinator shall have discretion over the allocation of funds.

(d) Report. – By September 30, 2021, and every subsequent three months in which funds are awarded, the recruitment and retention coordinator shall report to the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, and the Fiscal Research Division on the name of the identified public school units receiving funds, the amount of funds received by each identified public school unit, and the purposes for which the funds were used."

SECTION 2.(b) Appropriation; Administrative Costs. – There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Public Instruction for the 2021-2022 fiscal year the sum of six hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$650,000) in recurring funds to establish and implement the Program established by this section. The Department shall use up to one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) of these funds to establish one new, full-time equivalent recruitment and retention coordinator position at the Department to administer the Program.

SECTION 2.(c) This section becomes effective July 1, 2021.

PART III. STIPENDS FOR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY INTERNS

SECTION 3. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Public Instruction for the 2021-2022 fiscal year the sum of four million five hundred twenty-six thousand five hundred fifty dollars (\$4,526,550) in recurring funds to provide monthly stipends to up to 100 school psychology interns, as follows:

- (1) Stipends shall be equivalent to the monthly salary amounts provided on the first step of the Teachers Salary Schedule for school psychologists.
- (2) Stipends shall be provided for up to 12 months.
- (3) School psychology interns shall be selected to receive the stipends pursuant to a process developed by the Department. The process shall require school psychology interns receiving stipends pursuant to this section to meet at least the following criteria:
 - a. Be enrolled in a graduate program that is accredited by the National Association of School Psychologists.
 - b. Agree that the internship will include at least 1,200 hours of field experience on a full-time basis over the course of one academic year.

PART IV. EFFECTIVE DATE

SECTION 4. Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes law.