AN ACT

To enact Chapter 31 of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be comprised of R.S. 17:3721 through 3726, relative to increasing the number of certified athletic trainers in rural areas; to establish the Athletic Trainer Professional Development Program; to provide with respect to the powers and duties of the state Department of Education; to provide funding for the program; to provide qualifications and restrictions for the program; to provide for an effective date; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

Section 1. Chapter 31 of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, comprised of R.S. 17:3721 through 3726, is hereby enacted to read as follows:

CHAPTER 31. ATHLETIC TRAINER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

§3721. Athletic Trainer Professional Development Program

The Athletic Trainer Professional Development Program is hereby created in the state Department of Education. The program is established to meet the projected shortage of certified athletic trainers employed at high schools in rural areas of the state by increasing the number of certified athletic trainers through a loan repayment program.
§3722. Definitions

For the purpose of this Chapter, the following terms have the following meanings unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

(1) "Athletic trainer" means an individual possessing a master's degree in athletic training from an institution accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education.

(2) "Department" means the Department of Education.

(3) "Rural area" means a parish with a population of fewer than one hundred thousand persons according to the latest federal decennial census.

(4) "Superintendent" means the state superintendent of education.

§3723. Retention and recruitment

A. The department shall develop and administer a plan for recruitment and retention of athletic trainers at high schools in rural areas. The plan shall provide for identification of shortage areas, prioritization of long-term and short-term goals, strategies for recruiting athletic trainers to rural areas, and public input.

B. The department shall implement the retention and recruitment plan, directly or through contract. Implementation may include advertising and promotion, professional recruitment services, travel, and all other necessary tasks. Total implementation costs shall not exceed seventy-five thousand dollars.

§3724. Loan repayment program

A. The department shall administer a loan repayment program.

B. To be eligible for the loan repayment program, an applicant must be an athletic trainer, be willing to work for a high school in a rural area, and meet any other requirements which may be established by the department.

C. Educational loans obtained by an eligible applicant for attending an accredited athletic trainer program shall be repaid retroactively after each term of service employed at a high school in a rural area for up to five years depending upon the applicant's length of service. Loans shall be repaid pursuant to the provisions of this Section at the following rates:
(1) Six thousand dollars per year of service if the applicant obtained his
degree from a school or program in Louisiana.

(2) Four thousand dollars per year of service if the applicant obtained his
degree from a school or program outside of Louisiana.

D. No later than January 1, 2023, the department shall establish an
implementation schedule for loan repayments.

§3725. Rules

The State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education shall promulgate
rules and regulations in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act as
necessary to carry out the provisions of this Chapter.

§3726. Athletic Trainer Professional Development Fund

There is hereby created as a special fund in the state treasury the Athletic
Trainer Professional Development Fund, referred to in this Section as the "fund".
The treasurer is hereby authorized to transfer and deposit one and one-half million
dollars of state general fund monies into the fund after compliance with the
requirements of Article VII, Section 9(B) of the Constitution of Louisiana relative
to the Bond Security and Redemption Fund. Monies in the fund shall be used for the
programs established in this Chapter. Monies in the fund shall be invested by the
treasurer in the same manner as monies in the state general fund and all interest
earned shall be deposited in and credited to the fund. All unexpended or
uncumbered monies in the fund at the end of the fiscal year shall remain in the
fund.

Section 2. The provisions of Section 1 of this Act shall become effective when an
Act of the Louisiana Legislature containing a specific appropriation of monies for the
implementation of the provisions of this Act becomes effective.

Section 3. The provisions of Sections 2 and 3 of this Act shall become effective
upon signature by the governor or, if not signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time
for bills to become law without signature by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section
18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved
by the legislature, the provisions of Sections 2 and 3 of this Act shall become effective on
the day following such approval.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HB 736 Reengrossed 2022 Regular Session Beaulieu

Abstract: Establishes the Athletic Trainer Professional Development Program in the Dept. of Education ("department") and provides for funding and administration of the program and qualifications and restrictions for program offerings.

Proposed law seeks to increase the number of certified athletic trainers at high schools in rural areas of the state by establishing a loan repayment program for qualifying individuals. Defines "athletic trainer" to mean an individual possessing a masters degree in athletic training from an institution accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education. Defines "rural area" to mean a parish with a population of fewer than 110,000 persons as of the most recent federal decennial census.

Proposed law requires the department to develop and administer a plan for recruitment and retention of athletic trainers at high schools in rural areas. Requires the plan to provide for identification of shortage areas, prioritize long-term and short-term goals and strategies, and provide for public input. Authorizes the department to contract out for implementation of the plan. Prohibits implementation costs from exceeding $75,000.

Proposed law also establishes a loan repayment program for athletic trainers willing to work for a high school in a rural area and meet other requirements established by the department. Applies only to loans obtained to attend an accredited athletic trainer program. Authorizes retroactive repayment of these loans after each term of service employed at a high school in a rural area, for up to five years. Establishes the following rates for loan repayments pursuant to proposed law:

1) Up to $6,000 per year of service if the individual obtained his degree from a school or program in La.

2) Up to $4,000 per year of service if the individual obtained his degree from a school or program outside of La.

Requires the department to provide an implementation schedule for loan repayments by Jan. 1, 2023.

Proposed law requires the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to promulgate rules and regulations necessary to carry out proposed law.

Proposed law establishes the Athletic Trainer Professional Development Fund in the treasury and authorizes the state treasurer to transfer $1,500,000 into the fund. Prohibits use of the monies in the fund for purposes outside of proposed law. Provides for interest to be credited to the fund and for unexpended or unencumbered monies to remain in the fund at the end of the fiscal year.

Effective upon appropriation of funds by the legislature.

(Adds R.S. 17:3721-3726)
Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Appropriations to the engrossed bill:

1. Deletes requirement that the superintendent of education promulgate rules necessary to carry out proposed law. Instead requires BESE to promulgate such rules.

2. Make effectiveness of proposed law subject to appropriation of funds by the legislature.

3. Make technical changes.