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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority Highlights Two Initiatives Supporting Murphy Administration’s Comprehensive Efforts to Address Educator Shortage, Grow K-12 Workforce**

*Application Period for New Jersey Teacher Loan Redemption Program Closes February 1, 2024*

**GALLOWAY, NJ** — The Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA) today highlighted two key initiatives to help attract and retain teachers as part of the Murphy Administration’s broader efforts to address the national K-12 educator shortage in New Jersey. In addition to raising awareness of the recent launch of the application period for the New Jersey Teacher Loan Redemption Program, HESAA Executive Director David Socolow met with key stakeholders at Stockton University to discuss the vital support for New Jersey’s education workforce from both the loan redemption program and the new Student-Teacher Stipend Pilot Program.

“With one of the top education systems in our nation, New Jersey is looking to grow and strengthen our educational workforce,” **said Governor Phil Murphy**. “Teachers are the lifeblood of our school systems, helping to prepare the future leaders of our state, country, and the world. It is of critical importance that we create competitive initiatives that attract and retain top educator talent by ensuring financial barriers don’t keep great teachers out of the classroom.”

“New Jersey’s expanded support for current and aspiring teachers in our communities will boost the success of students throughout their academic journeys,” **said HESAA Executive Director Socolow**. “These critical HESAA initiatives play a key role in the Murphy Administration’s comprehensive and ongoing efforts to grow New Jersey’s educator workforce. I thank Governor Murphy and the Legislature for their commitment to these innovative programs to mitigate the teacher shortage for New Jersey’s students and school communities.”

The [New Jersey Teacher Loan Redemption Program](#) offers partial student loan redemption for certain recently-hired teachers in high-need fields within eligible schools. Teachers can receive up to \$5,000 per

year, up to a maximum total of \$20,000 in student loan redemption in exchange for teaching in a qualifying position for up to four years. To be eligible, an educator must teach a pre-K through 12 class in either mathematics, science, special education, English as a Second Language (ESL), and/or Career and Technical Education within one of the [schools](#) designated under the law's criteria.

The eligibility criteria for this program was expanded for the current fiscal year to help pay off student loans from any type of lender – including both public and private loans – for teachers who qualify. The Teacher Loan Redemption Program's application period opened earlier this month and will close on February 1, 2024.

The other initiative discussed during the event was the new [Student-Teacher Stipend Pilot Program](#). Under this program, HESAA issues \$3,000 stipends for student-teachers during their full-time clinical practice semester as part of an approved Educator Preparation Program (EPPs) at one of New Jersey's colleges and universities. This funding helps future educators with the cost of living while they are student-teaching, such as for housing, nutrition, health care, and education expenses.

The first round of stipends was recently issued by HESAA for the Fall 2023 semester's student-teachers enrolled in EPPs at New Jersey institutions of higher education. EPP students who complete their clinical practice in the Spring 2024 semester will receive their funding in the coming months.

These initiatives, both enabled by funding and policy changes in the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY2024) budget, represent part of the Murphy Administration's ongoing efforts to grow New Jersey's educator workforce in response to the national K-12 teacher shortage. The Administration has taken other steps, including:

- Establishing a [Task Force on Public School Staff Shortages](#);
- Streamlining the certification process for educators by eliminating the Educative Teacher Performance Assessment ([edTPA](#)) requirement as a condition of certification;
- Signing legislation to allow retired teachers to return to classrooms for up to two years while retaining their pensions;
- Implementing a [teacher certification fee holiday](#) to alleviate the financial burden and streamline the certification process for aspiring educators; and
- Allocating additional [funding](#) in the FY2024 budget to improve teacher quality of life, facilitate the development of local partnerships for paraprofessional training, encourage the recruitment of teachers from diverse backgrounds, and support a teacher apprenticeship program.

“I am proud to stand alongside our education partners, including Stockton University and the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA), to unveil two groundbreaking initiatives,” **said Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, Acting Commissioner of Education.** “These initiatives are integral to our collective mission of addressing the national educator shortage and play a critical role in cultivating a robust and dedicated educator workforce for New Jersey. Through collaborative efforts, we are shaping the future of education in our state.”

“As educators, we recognize the value of strong teachers and the transformative experiences they provide their students each day,” **said Stockton University President Joe Bertolino, Ed. D.** “We are pleased to

see their importance highlighted by these two programs. The stipends and loan redemption program provide tangible support to Stockton's student teachers as they embark on their teaching careers."

"Working in a high-need district, I personally feel that my ability to be an advocate for my students is the most important role that I possess," **said Emily Loeb, a science teacher at Atlantic City High School who spoke at today's event.**

"I'm an aspiring teacher looking to teach in Atlantic City schools, which was the community I grew up in," **said Ariana Ramirez, a Stockton University student currently completing her clinical practice semester at Pennsylvania Avenue School in Atlantic City who received the student-teacher stipend and spoke at today's event.** "The HESAA stipend will be very helpful for me, as I will be using it to further support my education by pursuing an ESL certification which will be useful towards my career."

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*HESAA, the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority, is the only New Jersey state authority with the sole mission of providing students and families with financial and informational resources for students to pursue their education beyond high school. For more information, visit <https://www.hesaa.org>.*