

TO: Legislative Colleagues  
FROM: Sen. Kathleen Vinehout  
DATE: February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
RE: LRB 5386/1 – The Rural Teachers Loan Forgiveness Bill  
**DEADLINE: 3pm on Friday, February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

Wisconsin's rural schools are the lifeblood of their communities. Dwindling resources is a significant challenge for rural districts to attract and retain quality rural teachers, especially when larger urban districts can offer significantly more attractive wages and benefits. This is a simple bill to give our rural school administrators a tool for attracting quality teachers who are over-burdened with debt from student loans.

Similar to the Hospital Assessment Supplementary Loan Assistance Program (HASLAP), which provides up to \$50,000 in grants to rural physicians, the Rural Teacher Loan Forgiveness bill offers four scholarships for each rural district that has fewer than ten students per square mile in their district. Paid out over five years, this \$10,000 loan forgiveness scholarship is awarded by the district administration to the teachers of their choice and is administered by HEAB. Increments for payment are \$1,000 in the first year, \$2,000 in the second, third, and fourth years, and \$3,000 in the fifth and final year of eligibility.

Rural schools have continually been expected to do more with less. They are struggling under the weight of poor state funding, teacher attraction and retention, and cross certification of high-demand subject areas. This bill will provide much needed assistance to those schools in all three areas so they can continue to provide a great education for all children in our public schools and keep our rural communities strong.

To co-sponsor this legislation, please **reply to this email or call Sen. Vinehout's office at 6-8546 before 3pm on Friday, February 16<sup>th</sup>.**

***Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau***

*This bill creates a rural teacher grant program, administered by the Higher Educational Aids Board, to encourage teachers to teach in rural schools.*

*Under current law, HEAB administers various financial assistance programs to assist teachers. Those programs include programs under which HEAB provides loans to college students and then forgives a certain amount of those loans after the loan recipient has been employed as a teacher in a high-demand area in a rural school district or a school in the city of Milwaukee, as a teacher of visually impaired pupils or as an orientation and mobility instructor in this state, or, for a minority student, as a teacher in a high-demand area in a school in the city of Milwaukee.*

*This bill creates a grant program to encourage eligible teachers to teach in schools operated by eligible school districts. Under the bill, 1) an "eligible school district" is a school district whose membership in the school year preceding the school year for which a grant is awarded under the grant program divided by the school district's area in square miles is less than ten and 2) an "eligible teacher" is a teacher who teaches in a school operated by an eligible school district.*

*The bill requires HEAB to grant financial assistance to an eligible teacher who is nominated by his or her school district for participation in the grant program and who submits a claim for that financial assistance after each year in which the eligible teacher teaches in such a school. The claim must 1) include the signature of the eligible teacher and of a representative of the*

*school district employing the eligible teacher certifying that during the period for which financial assistance is claimed, the school district was an eligible school district and the eligible teacher taught in a school operated by that eligible school district; 2) include a commitment by the eligible teacher that he or she will use the financial assistance to repay student loans incurred to defray the cost of tuition, fees, and expenses for programs of study relating to the teaching profession; and 3) provide such other information as HEAB may require by rule to verify the claimant's eligibility for financial assistance.*

*The maximum amount of financial assistance that an eligible teacher may receive under the grant program is \$1,000 for the first school year, \$2,000 for the second school year, \$2,000 for the third school year, \$2,000 for the fourth school year, and \$3,000 for the fifth school year in which the eligible teacher participates in the grant program. An eligible teacher may receive financial assistance under the grant program for no more than five school years. No more than four eligible teachers employed by a given eligible school district may participate in the grant program in a given school year.*

*For further information see the **state** fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.*