

State of Arkansas
95th General Assembly
Regular Session, 2025

A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1477

By: Representative Barker

By: Senator J. Bryant

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT CONCERNING THE ARKANSAS TEACHER OF THE YEAR ACT; TO ALLOW THE GOVERNING BODY OF AN OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL TO SUBMIT AN APPLICANT FOR CONSIDERATION FOR THE ARKANSAS TEACHER OF THE YEAR; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO ALLOW THE GOVERNING BODY OF AN OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL TO SUBMIT AN APPLICANT FOR CONSIDERATION FOR THE ARKANSAS TEACHER OF THE YEAR.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 6-17-2503(b)-(d), concerning the application process for the Arkansas Teacher of the Year Act, are amended to read as follows:

(b) The process shall allow ~~that~~ each Arkansas school district board of directors ~~may~~ and each governing body of an open-enrollment public charter school to submit a single applicant for the Arkansas Teacher of the Year.

(c) ~~The applicants~~ An applicant shall be ~~reduced to sixteen (16) finalists representing one (1) applicant for each of the fifteen (15) education service areas and one (1) applicant for school districts in Pulaski County~~ submitted to the division by a school district board of directors or governing body of an open-enrollment public charter school under subsection (b) of this section no later than April 1 of the year in which the Arkansas Teacher of the Year is selected.



(d) ~~In~~ By submitting an application for Arkansas Teacher of the Year, a school district or governing body of an open-enrollment public charter school agrees that if its applicant is selected, the school district or open-enrollment public charter school shall place that teacher on paid administrative leave for the school year immediately following his or her selection, as provided in § 6-17-2504.

SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 6-17-2503(f), concerning reimbursement to a school district that has a teacher placed on paid administrative leave under the Arkansas Teacher of the Year Act, is amended to read as follows:

(f) During the school year in which a school district's or an open-enrollment public charter school's Arkansas Teacher of the Year is on paid administrative leave, the division shall reimburse the school district or open-enrollment public charter school as provided in § 6-17-2505.

SECTION 3. Arkansas Code § 6-17-2504 is amended to read as follows:

6-17-2504. School district and open-enrollment public charter school responsibility.

(a) Each school district and open-enrollment public charter school whose applicant is selected as Arkansas Teacher of the Year shall place that teacher on paid administrative leave for the school year immediately following the teacher's selection as Arkansas Teacher of the Year for the time period that the teacher actually serves as the Arkansas Teacher of the Year.

(b) The teacher shall be entitled to return to his or her former employment with the school district or open-enrollment public charter school for the school year following the paid administrative leave provisions of this section.

(c) The school district or open-enrollment public charter school shall be responsible for providing a replacement teacher or restructuring class loads during the school year in which the teacher selected as Arkansas Teacher of the Year is on administrative leave.

(d) A school district or open-enrollment public charter school that employs a substitute teacher to replace the Arkansas Teacher of the Year shall not be subject to any earning limitations set in place by law or the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System.

(e) Each school district or open-enrollment public charter school classroom teacher contract shall reflect the administrative leave provisions of this section for any teacher selected as Arkansas Teacher of the Year.

SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 6-17-2505(a), concerning reimbursement to a public school district that has a teacher who is on paid administrative leave under the Arkansas Teacher of the Year Act, is amended to read as follows:

(a) During the school year in which a school district's or an open-enrollment public charter school's Arkansas Teacher of the Year is on paid administrative leave, the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education shall reimburse the school district or open-enrollment public charter school for:

(1) The teacher's salary and benefits; and

(2)(A) Incidental expenses incurred by the teacher as a result of his or her participation in the Arkansas Teacher of the Year Program.

(B) All incidental expenses shall be approved by the division.

APPROVED: 3/18/25