

CHAPTER 2022-186

Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 896

An act relating to educator certification pathways for veterans; amending s. 1012.56, F.S.; authorizing the Department of Education to issue a temporary certificate to specified military servicemembers who meet certain criteria; requiring a teacher mentorship for specified military servicemembers who hold a temporary certificate; specifying the duration and issuance of a temporary certificate for specified military servicemembers; amending s. 1012.59, F.S.; making a technical change; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Subsection (7) of section 1012.56, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1012.56 Educator certification requirements.—

(7) TYPES AND TERMS OF CERTIFICATION.—

(a) The Department of Education shall issue a professional certificate for a period not to exceed 5 years to any applicant who fulfills one of the following:

1. Meets all the applicable requirements outlined in subsection (2).
2. For a professional certificate covering grades 6 through 12:
 - a. Meets the applicable requirements of paragraphs (2)(a)-(h).
 - b. Holds a master's or higher degree in the area of science, technology, engineering, or mathematics.
 - c. Teaches a high school course in the subject of the advanced degree.
 - d. Is rated highly effective as determined by the teacher's performance evaluation under s. 1012.34, based in part on student performance as measured by a statewide, standardized assessment or an Advanced Placement, Advanced International Certificate of Education, or International Baccalaureate examination.
 - e. Achieves a passing score on the Florida professional education competency examination required by state board rule.
3. Meets the applicable requirements of paragraphs (2)(a)-(h) and completes a professional preparation and education competence program approved by the department pursuant to paragraph (8)(c) or an educator preparation institute approved by the department pursuant to s. 1004.85.

An applicant who completes one of these programs and is rated highly effective as determined by his or her performance evaluation under s. 1012.34 is not required to take or achieve a passing score on the professional education competency examination in order to be awarded a professional certificate.

(b) The department shall issue a temporary certificate to any applicant who:

1. Completes the requirements outlined in paragraphs (2)(a)-(f) and completes the subject area content requirements specified in state board rule or demonstrates mastery of subject area knowledge pursuant to subsection (5) and holds an accredited degree or a degree approved by the Department of Education at the level required for the subject area specialization in state board rule; or

2. For a subject area specialization for which the state board otherwise requires a bachelor's degree, documents 48 months of active-duty military service with an honorable discharge or a medical separation; completes the requirements outlined in paragraphs (2)(a), (b), (d), (e), and (f); completes the subject area content requirements specified in state board rule or demonstrates mastery of subject area knowledge pursuant to subsection (5); and documents completion of 60 college credits with a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale, as provided by one or more accredited institutions of higher learning or a nonaccredited institution of higher learning identified by the Department of Education as having a quality program resulting in a bachelor's degree or higher.

(c) The department shall issue one nonrenewable 2-year temporary certificate and one nonrenewable 5-year professional certificate to a qualified applicant who holds a bachelor's degree in the area of speech-language impairment to allow for completion of a master's degree program in speech-language impairment.

(d) A person who is issued a temporary certificate under subparagraph (b)2. must be assigned a teacher mentor for a minimum of 2 school years after commencing employment. Each teacher mentor selected by the school district, charter school, or charter management organization must:

1. Hold a valid professional certificate issued pursuant to s. 1012.56;

2. Have earned at least 3 years of teaching experience in prekindergarten through grade 12; and

3. Have earned an effective or highly effective rating on the prior year's performance evaluation under s. 1012.34.

(e)1. A each temporary certificate issued under subparagraph (b)1. is valid for 3 school fiscal years and is nonrenewable.

2. A temporary certificate issued under subparagraph (b)2. is valid for 5 school fiscal years, is limited to a one-time issuance, and is nonrenewable.

At least 1 year before an individual’s temporary certificate is set to expire, the department shall electronically notify the individual of the date on which his or her certificate will expire and provide a list of each method by which the qualifications for a professional certificate can be completed. The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to allow the department to extend the validity period of a temporary certificate for 2 years when the requirements for the professional certificate were not completed due to the serious illness or injury of the applicant, the military service of an applicant’s spouse, other extraordinary extenuating circumstances, or if the certificateholder is rated highly effective in the immediate prior year’s performance evaluation pursuant to s. 1012.34 or has completed a 2-year mentorship program pursuant to s. 1012.56(8). The department shall extend the temporary certificate upon approval by the Commissioner of Education. A written request for extension of the certificate shall be submitted by the district school superintendent, the governing authority of a university lab school, the governing authority of a state-supported school, or the governing authority of a private school.

Section 2. Paragraph (c) of subsection (3) of section 1012.59, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1012.59 Certification fees.—

(3) The State Board of Education shall waive initial general knowledge, professional education, and subject area examination fees and certification fees for:

(c) An honorably discharged veteran of the United States Armed Forces or a veteran of a reserve component thereof ~~who served on active duty~~ and the spouse or surviving spouse of such a veteran.

Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2022.

Approved by the Governor June 9, 2022.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 9, 2022.