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SYNOPSIS:

Under existing law, the Volunteer Rescue Squad Tuition Reimbursement Act of 2018, provides tuition reimbursement for students who successfully complete an Emergency Medical Technician or Paramedic certification program offered by a member institution of the Alabama Community College System or the Alabama Fire College and contract to provide three years of service to a volunteer rescue squad or fire department.

This bill would decrease the required contracted for service time after graduation and licensing from three years to two years.

This bill would expand the program to include students who contract and provide service to an ambulance service.

This bill would provide for exclusions from reimbursement.

This bill would increase the maximum amount of operational expenses reimbursed by the program to the Alabama Community College System for administering the program from two percent to 10 percent of the funding for the program per fiscal year.

This bill would also provide for the retroactive reimbursement of certain related necessary fees and required expenses.



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A BILL  
TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

Relating to the Volunteer Rescue Squad Tuition Reimbursement Act of 2018; to amend Sections 22-18-60, 22-18-61, 22-18-63, and 22-18-64, Code of Alabama 1975, to decrease the required contracted for service time after graduation and licensing from three years to two years; to expand the program to include students who contract and provide service to ambulance services; to provide exclusions from reimbursement; and to increase the amount of operational expenses reimbursed to the Alabama Community College System; and to add Section 22-18-61.1 to the Code of Alabama 1975, to provide for the retroactive reimbursement of certain fees and expenses.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. Sections 22-18-60, 22-18-61, 22-18-63, and 22-18-64 of the Code of Alabama 1975, are amended to read as follows:

"§22-18-60

For the purposes of this article, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

(1) ACCS. The Alabama Community College System.

(2) AMBULANCE SERVICE. An ambulance service located in this state which is a member of the Alabama Association of



57 Ambulance Services.

58 ~~(2)~~ (3) ASSOCIATIONS. The Alabama Association of Rescue  
59 Squads ~~or,~~ the Alabama Association of Volunteer Fire  
60 Departments, or the Alabama Association of Ambulance Services.

61 ~~(3)~~ (4) EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES PERSONNEL (EMSP). All  
62 recognized levels of personnel licensed by the Alabama  
63 Department of Public Health, who have met all primary ~~and/or~~  
64 or renewal educational requirements, or both, set by the  
65 Alabama Department of Public Health, and who are allowed to  
66 provide medical care within the level of their scope of  
67 practice granted by the Office of Emergency Medical Services  
68 ~~(OEMS)~~ within the Alabama Department of Public Health.

69 ~~(4)~~ (5) FIRE COLLEGE. The Alabama Fire College.

70 ~~(5)~~ (6) STUDENT. A student enrolled in an emergency  
71 medical services certification program at a member institution  
72 of the ~~Alabama Community College System~~ ACCS, the ~~Alabama Fire~~  
73 ~~College~~ fire college, or the University of South Alabama.

74 (7) TUITION COSTS. Includes the actual cost of tuition  
75 and fees required to complete an approved course of  
76 instruction for EMSP certification, as determined by each  
77 eligible educational institution.

78 ~~(6)~~ (8) VOLUNTEER RESCUE SQUAD. A volunteer rescue squad  
79 located in the State of Alabama and is a member of the Alabama  
80 Association of Rescue Squads.

81 ~~(7)~~ (9) VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT. A volunteer fire  
82 department located in ~~the State of Alabama and is a member of~~  
83 ~~the Alabama Association of Volunteer Fire Departments~~ this  
84 state."



85 "§22-18-61

86 (a) The ~~Alabama Community College System~~ ACCS, the  
87 ~~Alabama Fire College~~ fire college, and the University of South  
88 Alabama, in consultation with the associations, shall jointly  
89 develop and administer a student tuition reimbursement program  
90 for students ~~that agree in the form of an enforceable~~ who  
91 ~~contract agreement,~~ to provide two years of emergency medical  
92 services for volunteer rescue squads ~~or,~~ volunteer fire  
93 departments ~~in Alabama,~~ or ambulance services after becoming a  
94 licensed EMSP ~~subject to the student agreeing to provide three~~  
95 ~~years of service to a volunteer rescue squad or volunteer fire~~  
96 ~~department.~~

97 (b) (1) Tuition reimbursement under this article shall  
98 ~~be the actual~~ cover tuition costs paid by the student  
99 ~~associated with obtaining certification~~ or the volunteer  
100 rescue squad, volunteer fire department, ambulance service, or  
101 an association on behalf of the student of which the student  
102 is a member. Tuition paid by the volunteer rescue squad,  
103 volunteer fire department, ambulance service, or association  
104 shall be reimbursed directly to the volunteer rescue squad,  
105 volunteer fire department, ambulance service, or association.

106 (2) Tuition reimbursement under this article shall not  
107 include any tuition costs covered by grants or other monetary  
108 awards provided to a student including, but not limited to,  
109 federal education grants and scholarships, as determined by  
110 the ACCS.

111 (3) Tuition costs shall not be reimbursed until the  
112 student provides ACCS and the associations with documentation



113 that he or she has successfully completed the approved course  
114 of instruction, proof of passing the certification exam,  
115 production of a valid EMSP license from the Alabama Department  
116 of Public Health and a contractual agreement to comply with  
117 the service requirements.

118 (c) In the event that a tuition reimbursement recipient  
119 fails to meet the service requirements for any reason other  
120 than extreme hardship as defined within the joint agreement  
121 required in Section 22-18-64(b), the individual shall be  
122 deemed to have breached the underlying contract and shall be  
123 liable in the form of monetary damages to the state for the  
124 immediate repayment of the total tuition ~~amount~~ costs  
125 reimbursed, plus interest at the rate of eight percent. The  
126 associations shall notify ACCS of recipients who fail to meet  
127 the service requirements.

128 (d) Beginning with the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the  
129 amount of tuition reimbursement available to students shall be  
130 divided among volunteer fire departments, rescue squads, and  
131 ambulance services based on available appropriations. The ACCS  
132 shall create operational procedures to ensure that funds and  
133 volunteer service commitments are split equitably among  
134 volunteer fire departments, rescue squads, and ambulance  
135 services. Notwithstanding the foregoing, priority shall be  
136 given to volunteer fire departments, rescue squads, and  
137 nonprofit ambulance services."

138 "§22-18-63

139 (a) The tuition reimbursement program is subject to  
140 direct appropriations from the Education Trust Fund.



141 (b) Any monies appropriated for the program that are  
142 unexpended at the end of a fiscal year shall not revert, but  
143 shall be carried forward for use of the program in the next  
144 fiscal year.

145 (c) Beginning in the 2024-2025 fiscal year, any  
146 unexpended funds in excess of five hundred thousand dollars  
147 (\$500,000) shall be transferred to the fire college to provide  
148 emergency medical services equipment and operations grants to  
149 volunteer fire departments and rescue squads. Grants shall be  
150 approved by the Alabama Joint Fire Council."

151 "§22-18-64

152 (a) The ACCS shall annually report on the condition and  
153 accomplishments of the tuition reimbursement program to the  
154 Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives, President  
155 Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Chair of the House Ways and  
156 Means Education Committee, the Chair of the Senate Finance and  
157 Taxation Education Committee, and the Deputy Director of the  
158 Legislative Services Agency, Fiscal Division. The report shall  
159 include the number of students participating in the program  
160 and the amount of tuition reimbursed for the reporting year.  
161 The member institutions of the ACCS, the ~~Fire College~~ fire  
162 college, and the University of South Alabama shall provide  
163 this information to ACCS for inclusion in the annual report.  
164 The report shall be submitted by the fifth legislative day of  
165 each regular session of the Legislature.

166 (b) The ACCS, the ~~Fire College~~ fire college, and the  
167 University of South Alabama shall enter into a joint agreement  
168 to implement and administer the tuition reimbursement program,



169 which shall include provisions for ensuring that operational  
170 expenses for the program in a fiscal year do not exceed ~~two~~ 10  
171 percent of the funding for the program in that fiscal year.  
172 The joint agreement shall provide for limiting the acceptance  
173 of applications for the program or limiting tuition  
174 reimbursements when necessary, or both.

175 (c) Any monies received for the operations of the  
176 tuition reimbursement program, including repayments, interest,  
177 and penalties paid because of failure to honor service  
178 requirements, shall be used to fund tuition reimbursements."

179 Section 2. Section 22-18-61.1 is added to the Code of  
180 Alabama 1975, to read as follows:

181 §22-18-61.1

182 Upon written request by an association or a member of  
183 an association, the ACCS may retroactively consider  
184 reimbursement of actual tuition costs, excluding required  
185 fees, provided by the association or its members to a student  
186 to pay his or her eligible tuition costs.

187 Section 3. Section 1 of this act shall become effective  
188 on the first day of the third month following its passage and  
189 approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.  
190 Section 2 of this act shall become effective immediately  
191 following its passage and approval by the Governor, or its  
192 otherwise becoming law.