
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2002

State of Washington

66th Legislature

2020 Regular Session

By House College & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Representatives Ortiz-Self, Bergquist, Santos, and Leavitt)

1 AN ACT Relating to creating the social work professional loan
2 repayment program; amending RCW 28B.115.020, 28B.115.030,
3 28B.115.090, and 28B.115.110; reenacting and amending RCW
4 28B.115.070; adding a new section to chapter 28B.115 RCW; and
5 creating new sections.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** It is the intent of the legislature to
8 incentivize social workers to enter into and continue in state
9 service. Annual turnover is over twenty percent statewide for child
10 welfare workers and over thirty percent in some regions. Repeated
11 turnover has direct costs and indirect costs such as low morale,
12 increased workloads, and the impact of relative inexperience on
13 outcomes of safety, permanence, and well-being. Consistent social
14 worker assistance to families creates better outcomes and increases
15 family reunification. The cost of achieving their professional
16 credential requirements can result in a social worker having an
17 educational debt burden greater than their annual salary. Over eighty
18 percent of social workers have student debt and the pressure to pay
19 this debt while caring for at-risk children in crisis can be a major
20 barrier to retaining social workers. In addition, educational debt
21 has been identified as a deterrent to students entering into public

1 service careers. Therefore, it is the legislature's intent to support
2 and incentivize social workers who serve the state by establishing
3 the social work professional loan repayment program under the
4 umbrella of the Washington health corps.

5 **Sec. 2.** RCW 28B.115.020 and 2019 c 302 s 2 are each amended to
6 read as follows:

7 Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in
8 this section apply throughout this chapter.

9 (1) "Credentialed health care profession" means a health care
10 profession regulated by a disciplining authority in the state of
11 Washington under RCW 18.130.040 or by the pharmacy quality assurance
12 commission under chapter 18.64 RCW and designated by the department
13 in RCW 28B.115.070 as a profession having shortages of credentialed
14 health care professionals in the state.

15 (2) "Credentialed health care professional" means a person
16 regulated by a disciplining authority in the state of Washington to
17 practice a health care profession under RCW 18.130.040 or by the
18 pharmacy quality assurance commission under chapter 18.64 RCW.

19 (3) "Department" means the state department of health.

20 (4) "Eligible education and training programs" means education
21 and training programs approved by the department that lead to
22 eligibility for a credential as a credentialed health care
23 professional.

24 (5) "Eligible expenses" means reasonable expenses associated with
25 the costs of acquiring an education such as tuition, books,
26 equipment, fees, room and board, and other expenses determined by the
27 office.

28 (6) "Eligible student" means a student who has been accepted into
29 an eligible education or training program and has a declared
30 intention to serve in a health professional shortage area upon
31 completion of the education or training program.

32 (7) "Forgiven" or "to forgive" or "forgiveness" means to
33 (~~render~~) either:

34 (a) Render health care services in a health professional shortage
35 area or an underserved behavioral health area in the state of
36 Washington in lieu of monetary repayment; or

37 (b) Render social work services on behalf of an eligible state
38 employer.

1 (8) "Health professional shortage areas" means those areas where
2 credentialed health care professionals are in short supply as a
3 result of geographic maldistribution or as the result of a short
4 supply of credentialed health care professionals in specialty health
5 care areas and where vacancies exist in serious numbers that
6 jeopardize patient care and pose a threat to the public health and
7 safety. The department shall determine health professional shortage
8 areas as provided for in RCW 28B.115.070. In making health
9 professional shortage area designations in the state the department
10 may be guided by applicable federal standards for "health manpower
11 shortage areas," and "medically underserved areas," and "medically
12 underserved populations."

13 (9) "Loan repayment" means a loan that is paid in full or in part
14 if the participant (~~(renders)~~) either:

15 (a) Renders health care services in a health professional
16 shortage area or an underserved behavioral health area as defined by
17 the department; or

18 (b) Renders social work services on behalf of an eligible state
19 employer.

20 (10) "Nonshortage rural area" means a nonurban area of the state
21 of Washington that has not been designated as a rural physician
22 shortage area. The department shall identify the nonshortage rural
23 areas of the state.

24 (11) "Office" means the office of student financial assistance.

25 (12) "Participant" means (~~(a)~~):

26 (a) A credentialed health care professional who has received a
27 loan repayment award and has commenced practice as a credentialed
28 health care (~~(provider)~~) professional in a designated health
29 professional shortage area or an underserved behavioral health area;

30 (b) A social worker employed with an eligible state employer; or
31 (~~a~~)

32 (c) An eligible student who has received a scholarship under this
33 program.

34 (13) "Required service obligation" means (~~(a)~~):

35 (a) An obligation by the participant to provide health care
36 services in a health professional shortage area or an underserved
37 behavioral health area for a period to be established as provided for
38 in this chapter; or

1 (b) An obligation by the participant to provide social work
2 services for an eligible state employer for a period as provided for
3 in this chapter.

4 (14) "Rural physician shortage area" means rural geographic areas
5 where primary care physicians are in short supply as a result of
6 geographic maldistributions and where their limited numbers
7 jeopardize patient care and pose a threat to public health and
8 safety. The department shall designate rural physician shortage
9 areas.

10 (15) "Satisfied" means paid-in-full.

11 (16) "Scholarship" means a loan that is forgiven in whole or in
12 part if the recipient either renders health care services in a health
13 professional shortage area or an underserved behavioral health area
14 or renders service as a social worker for an eligible state employer.

15 (17) "Sponsoring community" means a rural hospital or hospitals
16 as authorized in chapter 70.41 RCW, a rural health care facility or
17 facilities as authorized in chapter 70.175 RCW, or a city or county
18 government or governments.

19 (18) "Underserved behavioral health area" means a geographic
20 area, population, or facility that has a shortage of health care
21 professionals providing behavioral health services, as determined by
22 the department.

23 (19) "Eligible state employer" means either the department of
24 social and health services children's administration or the
25 department of children, youth, and families.

26 (20) "Social worker" means a person who has two years of
27 experience working with an eligible state employer and who meets one
28 of the following qualifications:

29 (a) Is licensed under RCW 18.225.090(1) (a);

30 (b) Has graduated with at least a bachelor's degree from a social
31 work educational program accredited by the council on social work
32 education; or

33 (c) Is employed as a social service specialist.

34 **Sec. 3.** RCW 28B.115.030 and 2019 c 302 s 3 are each amended to
35 read as follows:

36 The Washington health corps is the state's initiative to
37 encourage health care, behavioral health, and social work
38 professionals to work in underserved communities and in providing
39 assistance to the state's most vulnerable populations. In exchange

1 for service, the (~~health care~~) professional receives assistance
2 with higher education, in the form of loan repayment or a conditional
3 scholarship. The Washington health corps consists of the health
4 professional loan repayment and scholarship program (~~and~~), the
5 behavioral health loan repayment program, and the social work
6 professional loan repayment program.

7 (1) The health professional loan repayment and scholarship
8 program is established for credentialed health care professionals and
9 residents serving in health professional shortage areas.

10 (2) The behavioral health loan repayment program is established
11 for credentialed health care professionals serving in underserved
12 behavioral health areas.

13 (3) The social work professional loan repayment program is
14 established for social workers serving the state through employment
15 with an eligible state employer.

16 (4) The (~~health professional loan repayment and scholarship and~~
17 ~~the behavioral health loan repayment~~) Washington health corps
18 programs shall be administered by the office. In administering the
19 programs, the office shall:

20 (a) (i) Select credentialed health care professionals and
21 residents to participate in the loan repayment portion and in the
22 scholarship portion of the health professional loan repayment and
23 scholarship program; (~~and~~)

24 (ii) Select credentialed health care participants to participate
25 in the behavioral health loan repayment program; and

26 (iii) Select social workers to participate in the social work
27 professional loan repayment program;

28 (b) Adopt rules and develop guidelines to administer the
29 programs;

30 (c) Collect and manage repayments from participants who do not
31 meet their service obligations under this chapter;

32 (d) Publicize the program, particularly to maximize participation
33 among individuals in shortage and underserved areas and among
34 populations expected to experience the greatest growth in the
35 workforce;

36 (e) Solicit and accept grants and donations from public and
37 private sources for the programs;

38 (f) Use a competitive procurement to contract with a fund-raiser
39 to solicit and accept grants and donations from private sources for
40 the programs. The fund-raiser shall be paid on a contingency fee

1 basis on a sliding scale but must not exceed fifteen percent of the
2 total amount raised for the programs each year. The fund-raiser shall
3 not be a registered state lobbyist; and

4 (g) Develop criteria for a contract for service in lieu of the
5 service obligation where appropriate, that may be a combination of
6 service and payment.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.115
8 RCW to read as follows:

9 The office, in consultation with eligible state employers, shall
10 establish criteria for the selection of applicants for the social
11 work professional loan repayment program. The office shall consider
12 criteria that permits a social worker to apply to the program while
13 attending a master of social work program and employed with an
14 eligible state employer.

15 **Sec. 5.** RCW 28B.115.070 and 2019 c 415 s 954, 2019 c 406 s 72,
16 and 2019 c 302 s 6 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

17 (1) After June 1, 1992, the department, in consultation with the
18 office and the department of social and health services, shall:

19 ~~((1))~~ (a) Determine eligible credentialed health care
20 professions for the purposes of the health professional loan
21 repayment and scholarship program and the behavioral health loan
22 repayment program authorized by this chapter. Eligibility shall be
23 based upon an assessment that determines that there is a shortage or
24 insufficient availability of a credentialed profession so as to
25 jeopardize patient care and pose a threat to the public health and
26 safety. The department shall consider the relative degree of
27 shortages among professions when determining eligibility. The
28 department may add or remove professions from eligibility based upon
29 the determination that a profession is no longer in shortage. Should
30 a profession no longer be eligible, participants or eligible students
31 who have received scholarships shall be eligible to continue to
32 receive scholarships or loan repayments until they are no longer
33 eligible or until their service obligation has been completed;

34 ~~((2))~~ (b) Determine health professional shortage areas for each
35 of the eligible credentialed health care professions; and

36 ~~((3))~~ (c) Determine underserved behavioral health areas for
37 each of the eligible credentialed health care professions.

1 (2) For the 2017-2019 and 2019-2021 fiscal biennia, consideration
2 for eligibility shall also be given to registered nursing students
3 who have been accepted into an eligible nursing education program and
4 have declared an intention to teach nursing upon completion of the
5 nursing education program.

6 (3) For the 2019-2021 fiscal biennium, eligibility for loan
7 repayment shall also be given to chiropractors.

8 **Sec. 6.** RCW 28B.115.090 and 2019 c 302 s 8 are each amended to
9 read as follows:

10 (1) (a) The office may grant loan repayment and scholarship awards
11 to eligible participants from the funds appropriated to the health
12 professional loan repayment and scholarship program, or from any
13 private or public funds given to the office for this purpose.

14 (b) The office may grant loan repayment to eligible participants
15 from the funds appropriated to the behavioral health loan repayment
16 program or from any private or public funds given to the office for
17 this purpose.

18 (c) The office may grant loan repayment to eligible participants
19 from the funds appropriated to the social work professional loan
20 repayment program, or from any private or public funds given to the
21 office for this purpose.

22 (d) Participants are ineligible to receive loan repayment under
23 the health professional loan repayment and scholarship program
24 ((~~or~~)), the behavioral health loan repayment program, or the social
25 work professional loan repayment program if they have received a
26 scholarship from programs authorized under this chapter or chapter
27 70.180 RCW or are ineligible to receive a scholarship if they have
28 received loan repayment authorized under this chapter ((~~or chapter~~
29 28B.115 RCW)).

30 (2) Funds appropriated for the health professional loan repayment
31 and scholarship program, including reasonable administrative costs,
32 may be used by the office for the purposes of loan repayments or
33 scholarships. The office shall annually establish the total amount of
34 funding to be awarded for loan repayments and scholarships and such
35 allocations shall be established based upon the best utilization of
36 funding for that year.

37 (3) One portion of the funding appropriated for the health
38 professional loan repayment and scholarship program shall be used by
39 the office as a recruitment incentive for communities participating

1 in the community-based recruitment and retention program as
2 authorized by chapter 70.185 RCW; one portion of the funding shall be
3 used by the office as a recruitment incentive for recruitment
4 activities in state-operated institutions, county public health
5 departments and districts, county human service agencies, federal and
6 state contracted community health clinics, and other health care
7 facilities, such as rural hospitals that have been identified by the
8 department, as providing substantial amounts of charity care or
9 publicly subsidized health care; one portion of the funding shall be
10 used by the office for all other awards. The office shall determine
11 the amount of total funding to be distributed between the three
12 portions.

13 **Sec. 7.** RCW 28B.115.110 and 2019 c 302 s 10 are each amended to
14 read as follows:

15 (1) Participants in (~~the~~) Washington health corps programs who
16 are awarded loan repayments shall receive payment for the purpose of
17 repaying educational loans secured while attending (~~a~~) either:

18 (a) A program of health professional training which led to a
19 credential as a credentialed health care professional in the state of
20 Washington; or

21 (b) A social work educational program accredited by the council
22 on social work that led to at least a bachelor's degree or a
23 bachelor's degree in social services, human services, behavioral
24 sciences, criminal justice, or an allied field.

25 (~~(1)~~) (2) Participants shall agree to meet the required service
26 obligation.

27 (~~(2)~~) (3) Repayment shall be limited to eligible educational
28 and living expenses as determined by the office and shall include
29 principal and interest.

30 (~~(3)~~) (4) Loans from both government and private sources may be
31 repaid by the program. Participants shall agree to allow the office
32 access to loan records and to acquire information from lenders
33 necessary to verify eligibility and to determine payments. Loans may
34 not be renegotiated with lenders to accelerate repayment.

35 (~~(4)~~) (5) Repayment of loans established pursuant to (~~the~~)
36 Washington health corps programs shall begin no later than ninety
37 days after the individual has become a participant. Payments shall be
38 made quarterly, or more frequently if deemed appropriate by the

1 office, to the participant until the loan is repaid or the
2 participant becomes ineligible (~~(due to discontinued)~~):

3 (a) Due to discontinued service in a health professional shortage
4 area or an underserved behavioral health area (~~(after)~~);

5 (b) Due to discontinued service for an eligible state employer;
6 or

7 (c) After the required service obligation when eligibility
8 discontinues, whichever comes first.

9 ~~((+5))~~ (6) Should the participant discontinue service in a
10 health professional shortage area (~~(or)~~), in an underserved
11 behavioral health area, or for an eligible state employer, payments
12 against the loans of the participants shall cease to be effective on
13 the date that the participant discontinues service.

14 ~~((+6))~~ (7) Except for circumstances beyond their control,
15 participants who serve less than the required service obligation
16 shall be obligated to repay to the program an amount equal to the
17 unsatisfied portion of the service obligation, or the total amount
18 paid by the program on their behalf, whichever is less. This amount
19 is due and payable immediately. Participants who are unable to pay
20 the full amount due shall enter into a payment arrangement with the
21 office, including an arrangement for payment of interest. The maximum
22 period for repayment is ten years. The office shall determine the
23 applicability of this subsection. The interest rate shall be
24 determined by the office and be established by rule.

25 ~~((+7))~~ (8) The office is responsible for the collection of
26 payments made on behalf of participants from the participants who
27 discontinue service before completion of the required service
28 obligation. The office shall exercise due diligence in such
29 collection, maintaining all necessary records to ensure that the
30 maximum amount of payment made on behalf of the participant is
31 recovered. Collection under this section shall be pursued using the
32 full extent of the law, including wage garnishment if necessary.

33 ~~((+8))~~ (9) The office shall not be held responsible for any
34 outstanding payments on principal and interest to any lenders once a
35 participant's eligibility expires.

36 ~~((+9))~~ (10) The office shall temporarily or, in special
37 circumstances, permanently defer the requirements of this section for
38 eligible students as defined in RCW 28B.10.017.

39 ~~((+10))~~ (11) The office shall establish an appeal process by
40 rule.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** The social work professional loan
2 repayment program fund is created in custody of the state treasurer.
3 Any funds appropriated by the legislature for the social work
4 professional loan repayment program or any other public or private
5 funds intended for loan repayments under this program shall be placed
6 in the program fund created by this section. All receipts from the
7 program shall be deposited into the program fund. Only the office of
8 student financial assistance, or its designee, may authorize
9 expenditures from the program fund. The program fund is subject to
10 allotment procedures under chapter 43.88 RCW, but no appropriation is
11 required for expenditures.

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