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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

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A N A C T

RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- HEALTH PROFESSIONAL LOAN
REPAYMENT PROGRAM

Introduced By: Senators Gallo, Murray, Lawson, Ciccone, Tikoian, and LaMountain

Date Introduced: March 12, 2026

Referred To: Senate Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Sections 23-14.1-1, 23-14.1-2, 23-14.1-3, 23-14.1-5, 23-14.1-7 and 23-14.1-
2 11 of the General Laws in Chapter 23-14.1 entitled "Health Professional Loan Repayment
3 Program" are hereby amended to read as follows:

4 **23-14.1-1. Legislative findings.**

5 The general assembly finds that:

6 (1) It is the right of every citizen of the state to have ready access to quality health care;

7 ~~and~~

8 (2) Health care facilities serving the poor, including community health centers throughout
9 the state, are experiencing increasing difficulty in attracting and retaining physicians and other
10 health professionals to administer to the ~~needy~~ underserved populations they serve. Therefore, it is
11 the general assembly's intent to provide incentives, in the form of loan repayment, to physicians,
12 dentists, dental hygienists, nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, physician assistants and
13 any other eligible health care professional under § 338A of the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C.
14 § 254I, who desire to serve the health care needs of medically underserved individuals in Rhode
15 Island; and

16 (3) There currently exists a national and regional shortage of primary care healthcare
17 providers. Primary care healthcare is provided by physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician
18 assistants and the overall number of medical professionals entering the field of primary care

1 [healthcare is declining. It is increasingly difficult for primary care practices to hire nurses, medical](#)
2 [assistants, behavioral health clinicians and other key staff, which is leading to even higher burnout](#)
3 [among primary care providers. Therefore, it is the intent of the general assembly to provide](#)
4 [incentives, in the form of loan repayment, to physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants](#)
5 [who desire to provide primary care health services in Rhode Island.](#)

6 **23-14.1-2. Definitions.**

7 For the purpose of this chapter, the following words and terms have the following meanings
8 unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

9 (1) “Board” means the health professional loan repayment board.

10 (2) “Community health center” means a healthcare facility as defined and licensed under
11 chapter 17 of this title.

12 (3) “Department” means the Rhode Island department of health.

13 (4) “Director” means the director of the Rhode Island department of health.

14 (5) “Eligible health professional” means a physician, dentist, dental hygienist, nurse
15 practitioner, certified nurse midwife, physician assistant, or any other eligible healthcare
16 professional under § 338A of the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. § 254I, licensed in the state
17 who has entered into a contract with the board to serve medically underserved populations.

18 (6) “Loan repayment” means an amount of money to be repaid to satisfy loan obligations
19 incurred to obtain a degree or certification in an eligible health profession as defined in subdivision
20 (5).

21 [\(7\) “Primary care” means healthcare services that cover a range of prevention, wellness,](#)
22 [and treatment for common illnesses and injuries. Primary care includes patients making an initial](#)
23 [approach to a healthcare professional for treatment as well as long-term relationships established](#)
24 [between a patient and a healthcare professional and may include family medicine or medical care,](#)
25 [general internal medicine or medical care, and general medical practice.](#)

26 **23-14.1-3. Health professional loan repayment program established.**

27 [\(a\)](#) There is established within the department, to be administered by the director, the health
28 professional loan repayment program whose purpose shall be to support:

29 [\(1\) The ~~the~~ recruitment and retention of high-quality health professionals working with](#)
30 [underserved populations in identified health professional shortage areas \(~~HPSAs~~\) by providing loan](#)
31 [repayment to eligible health professionals to defray the cost of their professional education; or](#)

32 [\(2\) The recruitment and retention of high-quality physicians, nurse practitioners and](#)
33 [physician assistants committed to working in primary care health settings in the state for at least](#)
34 [two \(2\) years providing loan repayment to eligible health professionals to defray the cost of their](#)

1 [professional education.](#)

2 **23-14.1-5. Duties of the board.**

3 The board shall:

4 (1) Determine which areas of the state shall be eligible to participate in the loan repayment
5 program each year, based on health professional shortage area designations;

6 [\(2\) Determine which areas of the state shall be eligible to participate in the loan repayment
7 program each year, based on primary care provider shortages;](#)

8 ~~(3)~~(3) Receive and consider all applications for loan repayment made by eligible health
9 professionals;

10 ~~(4)~~(4) Conduct a careful and full investigation of the ability, character, financial needs, and
11 qualifications of each applicant;

12 ~~(5)~~(5) Consider the intent of the applicant to practice in a health professional shortage area
13 [or commitment to providing primary care healthcare services,](#) and to adhere to all the requirements
14 for participation in the loan repayment program;

15 ~~(6)~~(6) Submit to the director a list of those individuals eligible for loan repayment [from
16 each program](#) and amount of loan repayment to be granted;

17 ~~(7)~~(7) Promulgate rules and regulations to ensure an effective implementation and
18 administration of the ~~program~~ [programs](#);

19 ~~(8)~~(8) Within ninety (90) days after the end of each fiscal year, the board shall approve and
20 submit an annual report to the governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, the president
21 of the senate, and the secretary of state, of its activities during that fiscal year. The report shall
22 provide: an operating statement summarizing meetings or hearings held, including meeting
23 minutes, subjects addressed, decisions rendered, applications considered and their disposition, rules
24 or regulations promulgated, studies conducted, polices and plans developed, approved, or modified,
25 and programs administered or initiated; a consolidated financial statement of all funds received and
26 expended including the source of the funds, a listing of any staff supported by these funds, and a
27 summary of any clerical, administrative, or technical support received; a summary of performance
28 during the previous fiscal year including accomplishments, shortcomings, and remedies; a synopsis
29 of hearings, complaints, suspensions, or other legal matters related to the committee; a summary of
30 any training courses held pursuant to this chapter; a briefing on anticipated activities in the
31 upcoming fiscal year, and findings and recommendations for improvements. The report shall be
32 posted electronically on the websites of the general assembly and the secretary of state pursuant to
33 the provisions of § 42-20-8.2. The director of the department of administration shall be responsible
34 for the enforcement of the provisions of this subsection; and

1 ~~(8)(9)~~ Conduct a training course for newly appointed and qualified members within six (6)
2 months of their qualification or designation. The course shall be developed by the chair of the
3 board, be approved by the board, and be conducted by the chair of the board. The board may
4 approve the use of any board and/or staff members and/or individuals to assist with training. The
5 training course shall include instruction in the following areas: the provisions of chapter 46 of title
6 42, chapter 14 of title 36, chapter 2 of title 38; and the board's rules and regulations. ~~The director~~
7 ~~of the department of administration shall, within ninety (90) days of June 16, 2006, prepare and~~
8 ~~disseminate training materials relating to the provisions of chapter 46 of title 42, chapter 14 of title~~
9 ~~36, and chapter 2 of title 38.~~

10 **23-14.1-7. Conditions of loan repayment.**

11 (a) Loan repayments under the provisions of this chapter shall be based upon the condition
12 that the recipient apply for a license to practice medicine, dentistry, dental hygiene, nurse
13 midwifery, as a registered nurse practitioner, or as a health care professional under § 338A of the
14 Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. § 254I, or be registered as a physician assistant in Rhode
15 Island at the earliest practicable opportunity.

16 (b) A recipient must agree to accept all patients regardless of their ability to pay for services
17 received. A recipient must agree to accept all forms of insurance as payment in full, including Titles
18 XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1395 et seq.

19 (c) A recipient [working with underserved populations in identified health professional](#)
20 [shortage areas](#) shall be required to practice full-time in a health professional shortage area for a
21 minimum of two (2) years in order to be eligible to participate in the program.

22 (d) [A recipient working in Rhode Island providing primary care healthcare services shall](#)
23 [be required to practice for two \(2\) years of full-time or part-time work, defined as twenty-four \(24\)](#)
24 [hours per week. The part-time work commitment would be prorated to the number of years required](#)
25 [to fulfill the work obligation for providing primary care health services in Rhode Island.](#)

26 **23-14.1-11. Appropriation.**

27 (a) The general assembly shall annually appropriate ~~one hundred thousand dollars~~
28 ~~(\$100,000)~~ [five hundred thousand dollars \(\\$500,000\) deposited into a restricted receipt account to](#)
29 [implement the loan repayment program established in § 23-14.1-3](#) for the purpose of repayment of
30 health education loans as outlined in this ~~bill~~ [chapter](#). ~~Those~~ [One hundred thousand dollars](#)
31 [\(\\$100,000\) in](#) funds shall be taken from the department of health appropriation for the governor's
32 children's health initiative, (RIte Track program). Funds in this account shall be used only for the
33 purpose of repayment of health education loans as outlined in this chapter. The state controller is
34 authorized and directed to draw his or her orders upon the general treasurer for the payment of that

1 sum, or so much of it as may be required from time to time, upon the receipt to him or her of duly
2 authenticated vouchers. Implementation of this program is contingent upon the appropriation of the
3 required resources.

4 (b) For fiscal year 2027-2028, and each fiscal year thereafter, the general assembly shall
5 annually appropriate a sum as it may deem necessary, but not less than five hundred thousand
6 dollars (\$500,000), to carry out the purposes of this chapter, and the state controller is hereby
7 authorized and directed to draw the controller's orders upon the general treasurer for the payment
8 of the sum(s) or so much thereof as may be required from time to time to be deposited in a restricted
9 receipt account upon receipt by the general treasurer of properly authenticated vouchers submitted
10 by the director.

11 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

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RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- HEALTH PROFESSIONAL LOAN
REPAYMENT PROGRAM

- 1 This act would expand the health professional loan repayment program to healthcare
- 2 providers practicing in primary care health settings.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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