



103RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2023 and 2024

SB2439

Introduced 2/10/2023, by Sen. Mattie Hunter

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

110 ILCS 947/65.120 new
110 ILCS 947/65.125 new

Amends the Higher Education Student Assistance Act. Creates the Social Worker and Qualified Mental Health Professional Loan Repayment Program. Provides that the Illinois Student Assistance Commission shall create and administer a Social Worker and Qualified Mental Health Professional Loan Repayment Program for applicants whose role is to primarily serve recipients of medical assistance or uninsured individuals or for an organization that predominately serves recipients of medical assistance or uninsured individuals after receiving loan repayment assistance. Sets forth conditions to apply to the program, loan repayment requirements, application requirements, repayment amounts, and other conditions. Creates the Social Worker and Qualified Mental Health Professional Grant Program. Provides that the Illinois Student Assistance Commission shall create and administer a Social Worker Grant Program for applicants whose role is to primarily serve recipients of medical assistance or uninsured individuals or for an organization that predominately serves recipients of medical assistance or uninsured individuals after receiving loan repayment assistance. Sets forth conditions to apply to the program, grant requirements, application requirements, repayment amounts, and other conditions. Effective January 1, 2024.

LRB103 27542 RJT 53917 b

1 AN ACT concerning education.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 5. The Higher Education Student Assistance Act is
5 amended by adding Sections 65.120 and 65.125 as follows:

6 (110 ILCS 947/65.120 new)

7 Sec. 65.120. Social Worker and Qualified Mental Health
8 Professional Loan Repayment Program.

9 (a) As used in this Section:

10 "Accredited school" means a college or university in which
11 a degree in social work, or an equivalent credential for a
12 health program is earned and for which the Council for Higher
13 Education Accreditation or its affiliates has determined that
14 the school meets specific standards for its programs, faculty,
15 and curriculum.

16 "Applicant" means a certified community health worker,
17 licensed social worker, licensed clinical social worker, a
18 licensed clinical professional counselor, a licensed
19 practitioner of the healing arts, or a licensed marriage and
20 family therapist who applies for loan repayment assistance
21 under this Section.

22 "Commercial loan" means a loan made by a bank, credit
23 union, savings and loan association, insurance company,

1 school, or other financial institution.

2 "Default" means failure to meet a legal obligation or
3 condition of a loan.

4 "Health professional shortage area" or "HPSA" means a
5 designation from the federal Department of Health and Human
6 Services that indicates the shortage of primary medical care
7 or dental or mental health providers. The designation may be
8 geographic, such as a county or service area; demographic,
9 such as low-income population; or institutional, such as a
10 comprehensive health center, federally qualified health
11 center, or other public facility.

12 "Dual eligible beneficiary" means an individual who
13 qualifies for both medical assistance and Medicare.

14 "Government loan" means a loan made by a federal, State,
15 county, or city agency authorized to make the loan.

16 "Lender" means the commercial or government entity that
17 makes a qualifying loan.

18 "Loan repayment award" or "award" means the amount of
19 funding awarded to a recipient based upon his or her
20 reasonable educational expenses, up to a maximum established
21 by the program.

22 "Medical assistance" refers to benefits provided under the
23 medical assistance program under Article V of the Illinois
24 Public Aid Code.

25 "Qualifying loan" means a government loan or commercial
26 loan used for tuition and reasonable educational and living

1 expenses related to undergraduate or graduate education that
2 was obtained by the recipient prior to his or her application
3 for loan repayment and that is contemporaneous with the
4 education received.

5 "Social Worker and Qualified Mental Health Professional
6 Loan Repayment Program" or "Loan Repayment Program" means the
7 Social Worker Loan and Qualified Mental Health Professional
8 Repayment Program created under subsection (b) of this
9 Section.

10 "Recipient" means a licensed social worker, licensed
11 clinical social worker, a licensed clinical professional
12 counselor, a licensed practitioner of the healing arts, or a
13 licensed marriage and family therapist that may use loan
14 repayment or grant funds.

15 (b) The Commission shall create and administer a Social
16 Worker and Qualified Mental Health Professional Loan Repayment
17 Program. An applicant whose role is to primarily serve
18 recipients of medical assistance or uninsured individuals or
19 who is employed by an organization that predominately serves
20 recipients of medical assistance or uninsured individuals may
21 apply to the Commission for loan repayment assistance under
22 the Loan Repayment Program. In order to be eligible for loan
23 repayment under this Section, the applicant shall comply with
24 the following:

25 (1) Be a current resident of the State.

26 (2) Be serving primarily recipients of medical

1 assistance or uninsured individuals, or be employed by an
2 organization that predominately serves recipients of
3 medical assistance or uninsured individuals; or have an
4 offer of employment primarily serving recipients of
5 medical assistance or uninsured individuals or at an
6 organization that predominately serves recipients of
7 medical assistance or uninsured individuals and begin
8 employment within 90 calendar days from submission of an
9 application.

10 (3) Have an undergraduate or graduate level social
11 work degree from an accredited school and have a current,
12 valid, and unencumbered license to practice the profession
13 in the State.

14 (4) Be a borrower with an outstanding balance on an
15 educational loan.

16 (5) Have not defaulted on an educational loan.

17 (6) Submit an application to participate in the Loan
18 Repayment Program.

19 (7) Sign a written agreement attesting to accepting
20 repayment of social work educational loans and to serve
21 for a 5-year period of obligated service in a role
22 primarily serving recipients of medical assistance or
23 uninsured individuals or for an organization that
24 predominately serves recipients of medical assistance or
25 uninsured individuals after receiving loan repayment
26 assistance. The written agreement shall outline details of

1 the loan repayment service obligations, including, but not
2 limited to, the time frame required for the recipient to
3 fulfill the service obligation.

4 (c) All applications must be submitted to the Commission
5 in a form and manner prescribed by the Commission.

6 (d) The amount of the loan repayment shall not exceed
7 \$6,500 for each qualified applicant in the Loan Repayment
8 Program.

9 (e) Loan repayment funds under the Loan Repayment Program
10 shall be used according to the following:

11 (1) To repay qualifying educational loans of social
12 workers in Illinois whose role is to primarily serve
13 recipients of medical assistance or uninsured individuals
14 or who are employed by an organization that predominately
15 serves recipients of medical assistance or uninsured
16 individuals for a 5-year period after receiving loan
17 repayment assistance.

18 (2) For educational loans that were obtained prior to
19 the date the recipient submits an application for loan
20 repayment assistance.

21 (3) To retire qualifying educational loans if the
22 loans are the result of consolidated or refinanced debt.
23 To qualify, the consolidated or refinanced loans shall:

24 (A) be a government loan or a loan from a
25 commercial lender; and

26 (B) include only qualifying educational loans of

1 the social worker.

2 (f) An individual who meets the eligibility requirements
3 set forth in this Section may apply for loan repayment
4 authorized by this Section. In order to promote greater
5 diversity and community representation in healthcare, the
6 Commission shall set forward criteria that prioritizes
7 applicants, including, but not limited to, the following:

8 (1) Those who identify as a person from a race,
9 ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or
10 disability status that is underrepresented in the
11 healthcare sector.

12 (2) Persons working in a health professional shortage
13 area, including, but not limited to, rural healthcare
14 settings.

15 (g) An individual who is awarded a loan repayment under
16 this Section shall not receive a concurrent loan repayment
17 through any other State or federal loan repayment program.
18 Nothing in this Section prevents an individual from receiving
19 consecutive loan repayment awards under this Section or any
20 other State or federal program.

21 (110 ILCS 947/65.125 new)

22 Sec. 65.125. Social Worker and Qualified Mental Health
23 Professional Grant Program.

24 (a) As used in this Section:

25 "Accredited school" means a college or university in which

1 a degree in social work, or an equivalent credential for a
2 health program is earned and for which the Council for Higher
3 Education Accreditation or its affiliates has determined that
4 the school meets specific standards for its programs, faculty,
5 and curriculum.

6 "Applicant" means a licensed social worker, licensed
7 clinical social worker, a licensed clinical professional
8 counselor, a licensed practitioner of the healing arts, or a
9 licensed marriage and family therapist who applies for grant
10 under this Section.

11 "Commercial loan" means a loan made by a bank, credit
12 union, savings and loan association, insurance company,
13 school, or other financial institution.

14 "Default" means failure to meet a legal obligation or
15 condition of a loan.

16 "Dual eligible beneficiary" means an individual who
17 qualifies for both medical assistance and Medicare.

18 "Health professional shortage area" or "HPSA" means a
19 designation from the federal Department of Health and Human
20 Services that indicates the shortage of primary medical care
21 or dental or mental health providers. The designation may be
22 geographic, such as a county or service area; demographic,
23 such as low-income population; or institutional, such as a
24 comprehensive health center, federally qualified health
25 center, or other public facility.

26 "Government loan" means a loan made by a federal, State,

1 county, or city agency authorized to make the loan.

2 "Lender" means the commercial or government entity that
3 makes a qualifying loan.

4 "Loan repayment award" or "award" means the amount of
5 funding awarded to a recipient based upon his or her
6 reasonable educational expenses, up to a maximum established
7 by the program.

8 "Medical assistance" refers to benefits provided under the
9 medical assistance program under Article V of the Illinois
10 Public Aid Code.

11 "Qualifying loan" means a government loan or commercial
12 loan used for tuition and reasonable educational and living
13 expenses related to undergraduate or graduate education that
14 was obtained by the recipient prior to his or her application
15 for loan repayment and that is contemporaneous with the
16 education received.

17 "Social Worker and Qualified Mental Health Professional
18 Grant Program" or "Grant Program" means the Social Worker and
19 Qualified Mental Health Professional Grant Program created
20 under this Section.

21 "Recipient" means a licensed social worker, licensed
22 clinical social worker, a licensed clinical professional
23 counselor, a licensed practitioner of the healing arts, or a
24 licensed marriage and family therapist that may use loan
25 repayment or grant funds.

26 (b) The Commission shall create and administer a Social

1 Worker and Qualified Mental Health Professional Grant Program.
2 An applicant who agrees to serve in a role primarily serving
3 recipients of medical assistance or uninsured individuals or
4 at an organization that predominately serves recipients of
5 medical assistance or uninsured individuals for the required
6 timeframe may apply to the Commission for assistance with
7 educational expenses under the Grant Program. In order to be
8 eligible for a grant under this Section, the applicant shall
9 comply with the following:

10 (1) Be a current resident of the State.

11 (2) Agree to serve in a role primarily serving
12 recipients of medical assistance or uninsured individuals
13 or at an organization that predominately serves recipients
14 of medical assistance or uninsured individuals for the
15 required time frame.

16 (3) Be working toward completion of clinical
17 professional experience requirements for social work
18 licensure.

19 (4) Be working toward social work licensure as a part
20 of a graduate level program at an accredited school.

21 (5) Submit an application to participate in the Grant
22 Program.

23 (6) Sign a written agreement attesting to accepting
24 the grant and to serve for a 5-year period of obligated
25 service in a role primarily serving individuals on medical
26 assistance or uninsured individuals or for an organization

1 that predominately serves recipients of medical assistance
2 or uninsured individuals after completion of all
3 applicable educational requirements. The written agreement
4 shall outline details of the grant obligations, including,
5 but not limited to, the time frame required for the
6 recipient to fulfill the service obligation.

7 (c) The Commission shall receive and consider applications
8 for assistance with educational expenses under this Section
9 each year. All applications must be submitted to the
10 Commission in a form and manner prescribed by the Commission.

11 (d) The grant amount shall not exceed \$6,500 for each
12 qualified applicant in the Grant Program. The Commission shall
13 award a one-time grant to each qualified applicant.

14 (e) Funds under the Grant Program shall be used according
15 to the following:

16 (1) To pay for costs associated with social work
17 licensure or completion of a graduate level social work
18 degree at an accredited school if the applicant agrees to
19 serve in a role primarily serving recipients of medical
20 assistance or uninsured individuals or at an organization
21 that predominately serves recipients of medical assistance
22 or uninsured individuals for a 5-year period after
23 completion of applicable educational requirements.

24 (f) An individual who meets the eligibility requirements
25 set forth in this Section may apply for a grant authorized by
26 this Section. In order to promote greater diversity and

1 community representation in healthcare, the Commission shall
2 set forward criteria that prioritizes applicants, including,
3 but not limited to, the following:

4 (1) Those who identify as a person from a race,
5 ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or
6 disability status that is underrepresented in the
7 healthcare sector.

8 (2) Persons working in a Health Professional Shortage
9 Area, including, but not limited to, rural healthcare
10 settings.

11 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect January
12 1, 2024.