

AN ACT concerning education.

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

Section 5. The Higher Education Student Assistance Act is amended by adding Section 65.110 as follows:

(110 ILCS 947/65.110 new)

Sec. 65.110. School Social Work Shortage Loan Repayment Program.

(a) To encourage Illinois students to work, and to continue to work, as a school social worker in public school districts in this State, the Commission shall, each year, receive and consider applications for loan repayment assistance under this Section. This program shall be known as the School Social Work Shortage Loan Repayment Program. The Commission shall administer the program and shall adopt all necessary and proper rules to effectively implement the program.

(b) Beginning July 1, 2022, subject to a separate appropriation made for such purposes, the Commission shall award a grant, up to a maximum of \$6,500, to each qualified applicant. The Commission may encourage the recipient of a grant under this Section to use the grant award for repayment of the recipient's educational loan. If an appropriation for

this program for a given fiscal year is insufficient to provide grants to all qualified applicants, the Commission shall allocate the appropriation in accordance with this subsection. If funds are insufficient to provide all qualified applicants with a grant as authorized by this Section, the Commission shall allocate the available grant funds for that fiscal year to qualified applicants who submit a complete application on or before a date specified by the Commission, based on the following order of priority:

(1) first, to new, qualified applicants who are members of a racial minority as defined in subsection (e); and

(2) second, to other new, qualified applicants in accordance with this Section.

(c) A person is a qualified applicant under this Section if he or she meets all of the following qualifications:

(1) The person is a United States citizen or eligible noncitizen.

(2) The person is a resident of this State.

(3) The person is a borrower with an outstanding balance due on an educational loan related to obtaining a degree in social work.

(4) The person has been employed as a school social worker by a public elementary school or secondary school in this State for at least 12 consecutive months.

(5) The person is currently employed as a school

social worker by a public elementary school or secondary school in this State.

(d) An applicant shall submit an application, in a form determined by the Commission, for grant assistance under this Section to the Commission. An applicant is required to submit, with the application, supporting documentation as the Commission may deem necessary.

(e) Racial minorities are underrepresented as school social workers in elementary and secondary schools in Illinois, and the General Assembly finds that it is in the interest of this State to provide them priority consideration for programs that encourage their participation in this field and thereby foster a profession that is more reflective of the diversity of Illinois students and parents they will serve. A more reflective workforce in school social work allows improved outcomes for students and a better utilization of services. Therefore, the Commission shall give priority to those applicants who are members of a racial minority. In this subsection (e), "racial minority" means a person who is a citizen of the United States or a lawful permanent resident alien of the United States and who is:

(1) Black (a person having origins in any of the black racial groups in Africa);

(2) Hispanic (a person of Spanish or Portuguese culture with origins in Mexico, South or Central America, or the Caribbean Islands, regardless of race);

(3) Asian American (a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands); or

(4) American Indian or Alaskan Native (a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America).

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect July 1, 2022.