
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO LOAN REPAYMENT FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that many Hawaii
2 residents are unable to obtain timely and appropriate health
3 care due to shortages of primary and behavioral health care
4 professionals in the State. These shortages not only threaten
5 individual health, but the entire State's health care system.
6 Areas of Hawaii that have been designated by the federal
7 government as medically underserved have been most significantly
8 affected by shortages of primary and behavioral health care
9 professionals, including physicians, nurse practitioners,
10 physician assistants, and psychologists. Social workers,
11 marriage and family therapists, and registered nurses are also
12 urgently needed in these areas.

13 In many cases, the increasingly high cost of education for
14 health care professionals binds graduates to a career path that
15 provides sufficient income to repay often exorbitant student
16 loans. These career paths frequently lead to professional
17 practice in highly specialized fields of care in urban areas,



1 rather than in general practice on the neighbor islands or in
2 underserved areas in the State where the need is greatest. The
3 legislature further finds that states with robust primary health
4 care systems have lower costs and improved patient outcomes.
5 Recognizing this correlation, many states have made the policy
6 decision to dedicate public funds to the development of a strong
7 primary health care workforce for underserved areas.

8 The legislature also finds that the Hawaii state loan
9 repayment program administered by the John A. Burns school of
10 medicine of the University of Hawaii at Manoa leverages public
11 funds and private donations to access matching federal funds
12 through the National Health Service Corps State Loan Repayment
13 Program of the United States Department of Health and Human
14 Services. Since September 1, 2012, the loan repayment program
15 has supported seventy-six recipients in exchange for work
16 commitments in underserved geographic practice areas in Hawaii,
17 with eighty per cent remaining in Hawaii and sixty-one per cent
18 remaining at the site where they performed their service.
19 Currently, health care professionals who have benefited from the
20 loan repayment program serve on all islands and in the
21 communities at Hilo, Kihei, Waianae, Wailuku, and Waimea; at



1 health clinics in Kalihi-Palama and Kokua Kalihi Valley; and in
2 public institutional settings at the federal detention center in
3 Honolulu, Halawa correctional facility, and Maui County
4 correctional center.

5 The legislature recognizes the considerable positive public
6 outcomes achieved using general fund allocations during the
7 2017-2018 biennium and fiscal year 2019-2020 to educate, train,
8 and facilitate health care professionals to work in underserved
9 areas. Currently, the loan repayment program supports twenty-
10 three active health care professionals in Hawaii.

11 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds to the
12 department of health to fund the Hawaii state loan repayment
13 program administered through the John A. Burns school of
14 medicine of the University of Hawaii at Manoa to provide loan
15 repayment for health care professionals who commit to work in a
16 federally-designated health professional shortage area.

17 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
18 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$1,000,000 or so much
19 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 and the
20 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
21 2024-2025 for the Hawaii state loan repayment program



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1 administered through the John A. Burns school of medicine of the
2 University of Hawaii at Manoa; provided that no funds shall be
3 released unless matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis by funds
4 from a private or another public source.

5 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
6 of health in coordination with the John A. Burns school of
7 medicine of the University of Hawaii at Manoa for the purposes
8 of this Act.

9 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.

10

INTRODUCED BY: *Ally A. Beletti*
JAN 20 2023



H.B. NO. 661

Report Title:

Loan Repayment for Health Care Professionals; Health Care Shortage; Primary Care; Behavioral Health Care; University of Hawaii at Manoa; John A. Burns School of Medicine; Department of Health; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds for the Loan Repayment Program for Health Care Professionals, provided that the funds are matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis by funds from a private or another public source.

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