

ACT 151

H.B. NO. 313

A Bill for an Act Relating to Physician Workforce Assessment.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that there is a critical need for recruitment and retention of physicians to serve rural and medically underserved areas of the State. The shortage of physicians is as high as one thousand eight and is compounded by the fact that Hawaii has the fifth oldest physician workforce of all states, and more than half of the State's physicians will be over the age of sixty-five within ten years. The physician workforce assessment project has assisted with malpractice reform, provision of thousands of hours of continuing education, loan repayment for physicians working in areas of need, preparation of local students for medical school, and communication with physicians regarding continuing education. The project is currently working to make regional physician supply and demand maps and all available national data accessible on the Internet, as well as to hire a physician recruiter for all regions of Hawaii.

The legislature further finds that future efforts include providing bonuses for providers practicing in underserved areas, the formation of an office of rural training for promoting practice in underserved areas in the State, state-matched loan repayment relief to new providers, and scholarships for medical students who practice in underserved areas. In many cases, the increasingly high cost of education for health care professionals binds graduates to a career path that provides sufficient income to repay costly student loans. These career paths most frequently lead physicians to professional practice in highly specialized fields of care in urban areas rather than in general practice on the neighbor islands or in rural areas of the State where need for their service is greatest. Expanding the use of funding received through the existing physician workforce assessment fees will allow Hawaii to act rapidly to provide tangible solutions for the physician workforce shortage to help address the ongoing need for a strong physician workforce in the State.

The purpose of this Act is to:

- (1) Repeal the requirement that no less than fifty per cent of the assessment fees deposited into the John A. Burns school of medicine special fund be used for purposes identified by the Hawaii medical education council;

- (2) Repeal the monetary cap of expenditures from the John A. Burns school of medicine special fund; and
- (3) Authorize the John A. Burns school of medicine special fund to provide loan repayment to physicians who commit to working in medically underserved areas of the State as part of the Hawaii state loan repayment program and provide scholarships for qualifying medical students.

SECTION 2. Section 304A-2171, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by amending subsection (c) to read as follows:

“(c) Moneys in the special fund shall be used to support the John A. Burns school of medicine’s activities related to physician workforce assessment and planning within Hawaii; provided that ~~[oƒ]~~ the physician workforce assessment fees transferred and deposited into the special fund pursuant to section 453-8.8~~[-; no less than fifty per cent of the total amount of assessment fees deposited]~~ shall be used for purposes identified by the Hawaii medical education council to support physician workforce assessment and planning efforts, including the recruitment and retention of physicians, for rural and medically underserved areas of the State~~[-; provided further that expenditures from the special fund shall be limited to no more than \$245,000 annually]~~. This shall include but not be limited to ~~[maintaining]~~:

- (1) Maintaining accurate physician workforce assessment information and providing or updating personal and professional information, that shall be maintained in a secure database~~[-]~~;
- (2) Providing loan repayment to physicians who commit to working in medically underserved areas of the State as part of the Hawaii state loan repayment program administered by the John A. Burns school of medicine; and
- (3) Providing scholarships to qualifying medical students to be determined by the John A. Burns school of medicine.

The John A. Burns school of medicine may disclose information specific to any physician only with the express written consent of that physician.”

SECTION 3. Section 453-8.8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

“**§453-8.8 Physician workforce assessment fee; license; physician workforce information.** When a license is renewed, each physician or surgeon and each osteopathic physician or surgeon shall be assessed a fee of \$60 that shall be transferred and deposited into the John A. Burns school of medicine special fund established under section 304A-2171 to support ongoing assessment and planning of the physician workforce in Hawaii, including ~~[ongoing]~~:

- (1) Ongoing assessment and planning, as well as the recruitment and retention of physicians, especially for the physician workforce serving rural and medically underserved areas of the State~~[-]~~;
- (2) Providing loan repayment to physicians who commit to working in medically underserved areas of the State as part of the Hawaii state loan repayment program administered by the John A. Burns school of medicine; and
- (3) Providing scholarships to qualifying medical students to be determined by the John A. Burns school of medicine.

Payment of the physician workforce assessment fee shall be required for license renewal.”

SECTION 4. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2021.

(Approved July 1, 2021.)