

OFFICE OF POLICY AND LEGAL ANALYSIS

Date: February 23, 2021

To: Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Commerce

From: Samuel Senft, Legislative Analyst

LD 119 An Act To Increase Faculty in Nursing Education Programs by Amending the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program (Meyer)

SUMMARY

This bill amends the nursing education loan repayment program as follows.

1. It extends eligibility to apply to individuals who are currently enrolled in master's 25 or doctoral degree programs.
2. It specifies that applicants must indicate an intention to work as full-time nursing faculty in a nursing education program in the State, and increases that required commitment from 3 years to 5 years after acceptance into the nursing education loan repayment program.
3. It increases the maximum amount of loans eligible for repayment under the program from \$4,500 to \$30,000 for a master's degree and from \$6,000 to \$60,000 for a doctoral 31 degree.

TESTIMONY

Proponents:

- Maine is experiencing a net loss in nurses and a critical nursing shortage.
- There is insufficient staff at nursing schools in Maine; schools turn down many qualified applicants annually.
- 15 nursing programs in Maine, six public and nine private. Seven offer associates degrees, eight bachelors, three accelerated bachelors, five RN to BSN degrees, and five masters degrees.
- This program was est in 2005 but unfunded on the table.
- Some hospitals have their own loan assistance programs to recruit nurses
- Maine Hosp Assn surveyed hospitals on recruitment of nurses and found that non subsidized nurses to teach or hired nurses solely as preceptors. Several hospitals do have dedicated education units and at least two have simulation labs. Several also have residency programs for nurses. Estimate that hospitals spend 8.8 million to subsidize nursing programs, not including loan repayment.
- One can make a good living with a 2 year associate's degree and an RN. However to teach, one needs to have completed 6-10 years of post secondary education, at least at a master's level. This is expensive and results in a salary lower than a staff nurse.
- Loans for an MSN can be up to 30k and for a doctoral degree up to 60k.
- According to a 2017 study by DHHS< Maine faces a shortfall of 3400 RNs by 2025.
- Nursing homes and assisted living facilities also face significant nurse shortages. This directly impacts quality of care.
- Maine nursing homes serve some of highest acuity patients in the country.
- Maine nursing programs were surveyed in spring of 2019. Nine schools indicated that there were faculty vacancies - 13 openings with a projected need for 39 more faculty over the next 5 years.
- We need 1050 new licensed nurses in the state every year. In 2019 we had 831.
- In 2020, 37% of registered nurses were over age 56 and 58% over age 46. This is higher than the

<p>national average. Faculty were among nations oldest, with 38% over age 56.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional variations exist. Oldest nursing workforce is along the coast. Youngest in the County. • Maine schools have not received funding through the HRSA nurse loan repayment program. Very limited and competitive. • Estimate program could serve 35 masters and 4 doctoral students.
<p>Opponents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NONE
<p>Neither For Nor Against</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program, which has been in statute since 2005, has never been funded. FAME has no objection to administering it so long as reasonable administrative costs are met.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

LD 799, *An Act to Increase Faculty in Nursing Education Programs*, was introduced in the first session of the 129th. The bill was taken up by the IDEA Committee and combined with other legislation to create a bill establishing the Maine Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program Fund, thereby seeking to provide financial support to wide array of health care providers. It was proposed to fund the program with the Liquor Operation Revenue Fund. The bill received a divided OTPA/ONTP report out of committee but ultimately died on the Appropriations Table upon the conclusion of the 129th.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERTIONS

- While the bill increases the maximum award allocations from \$4,500 for a master's to \$30,000 for a bachelor's degree and from \$6,000 to \$60,000 for a doctoral degree, this bill will still need to go to the appropriations table to be actually funded.
- There was some discussion at the work session as to whether this bill was intended to be one time funding. As written, there is nothing to indicate that funding would not be ongoing. Again, funding will depend upon appropriations.

FISCAL IMPACT: Not yet determined.

Links:

1. [10 MRSA §1019](#). Nursing education loan repayment program
2. [LD 799 \(129th\) *An Act to Increase Faculty in Nursing Education Programs*](#)
3. [LD 799 \(129th\) Committee Amendment](#)
4. December 2017 final report of the [Taskforce on Maine's 21st Century Economy and Workforce](#). Recommendation #2 (page 7) of the Taskforce is to fund the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program.