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Legislative Document

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H.P. 4

House of Representatives, January 2, 2019

An Act To Enhance and Increase the Availability of Mental Health Providers in Maine

(EMERGENCY)

Reference to the Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Commerce suggested and ordered printed.

R(+ B. Hunt

ROBERT B. HUNT Clerk

Presented by Representative HANDY of Lewiston. Cosponsored by Senator BELLOWS of Kennebec and Representatives: FARNSWORTH of Portland, GRAMLICH of Old Orchard Beach, HEPLER of Woolwich, MADIGAN of Waterville, McCREA of Fort Fairfield, McCREIGHT of Harpswell, PERRY of Calais, Senator: HERBIG of Waldo.

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not 1 become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and 2 Whereas, there is an acute shortage of mental health providers in the State and 3 pressing mental health needs that affect the well-being and safety of the populace; and 4 Whereas, mental health providers, like many professionals, incur student debt and 5 have difficulty paying student loans: and 6 Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within 7 the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as 8 immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, 9 therefore, 10 Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows: 11 Sec. 1. 10 MRSA c. 110, sub-c. 2-B, as amended, is repealed. 12 Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA c. 441 is enacted to read: 13 14 CHAPTER 441 MAINE MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM 15 §12941. Definitions 16 As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms 17 have the following meanings. 18 1. Authority. "Authority" means the Finance Authority of Maine. 19 2. Fund. "Fund" means the Maine Mental Health Providers Loan Repayment Fund 20 established in section 12943. 21 3. Mental health provider. "Mental health provider" means an individual who 22 possesses, at a minimum, a bachelor's degree from a qualified institution of higher 23 education and who practices in the State as: 24 25 A. An individual licensed under Title 32, chapter 83; or B. An individual licensed under Title 32, chapter 119. 26 27 4. Program. "Program" means the Maine Mental Health Providers Loan Repayment Program established in section 12942. 28 5. Qualified institution of higher education. "Qualified institution of higher 29 education" means an accredited institution of higher education eligible to receive federal 30 assistance under a federal student assistance program authorized under the federal Higher 31 Education Act of 1965, Title IV. 32

1	<u>§12942. Maine Mental Health Providers Loan Repayment Program</u>		
2 3	1. Establishment. The Maine Mental Health Providers Loan Repayment Program is established to increase the number of mental health providers practicing in underserved		
4	areas of the State. The authority shall administer the program and the fund.		
5	2. Eligibility. To be eligible to participate in the program, an applicant must:		
6	A. Be a mental health provider;		
7 8	B. Have a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree related to the applicant's practice from a qualified institution of higher education;		
9	C. Possess an outstanding student loan relating to the degree under paragraph B;		
10 11	D. Practice in an underserved practice area in the State as defined in rule, including but not limited to the practice of mental health care or social work:		
12	(1) In a public or private child welfare or family service agency;		
13	(2) In a public or private educational institution, kindergarten to grade 12;		
14	(3) In a public or private hospital;		
15	(4) In a federally qualified health center;		
16	(5) In a community-based behavioral health center;		
17	(6) In a public interest law service;		
18	(7) In a public child care facility;		
19	(8) In a public service for individuals with disabilities;		
20	(9) In a public service for the elderly;		
21	(10) In a public service for veterans; or		
22 23	(11) At an organization exempt from taxation under the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, Section 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(6);		
24 25 26	E. Submit an application to the authority, which must include but is not limited to information concerning academic performance, awards and special honors and community involvement; and		
27 28 29	F. Sign a statement of intent to work as a mental health provider in an underserved practice area in the State for a minimum of 5 years after acceptance into the program in a form acceptable to the authority.		
30 31 32 33	3. Maximum amount; participants. The authority may annually accept up to 3 participants from the applications submitted in accordance with subsection 2. The maximum amount available to each participant is \$5,000 per year for a period of up to 5 years.		
34	<u>§12943. Maine Mental Health Providers Loan Repayment Fund</u>		
35 36	The Maine Mental Health Providers Loan Repayment Fund is created as a nonlapsing, interest-earning, revolving fund to carry out the purposes of this chapter.		

1 The authority may receive, invest and expend on behalf of the fund money from gifts, 2 grants, bequests and donations in addition to money appropriated or allocated by the State 3 and any federal funds received by the State for the benefit of mental health providers who 4 have outstanding student loans. Money received by the authority on behalf of the fund 5 must be used for the purposes of this chapter. The fund must be maintained and 6 administered by the authority. Any unexpended balance in the fund carries forward for 7 continued use under this chapter.

8 <u>Costs and expenses of maintaining, servicing and administering the fund and of</u> 9 <u>administering the program may be paid out of amounts in the fund.</u>

10 <u>§12944. Rules</u>

11 The authority shall adopt rules to carry out the purposes of this chapter. Rules 12 adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules pursuant to Title 5, chapter 13 375, subchapter 2-A.

14 Sec. 3. Appropriations and allocations. The following appropriations and allocations are made.

16 **FINANCE AUTHORITY OF MAINE**

17 Maine Mental Health Providers Loan Repayment Fund N281

18 Initiative: Provides a one-time appropriation for the repayment of student loans for 19 certain mental health providers who practice in underserved practice areas and to pay the 20 administrative costs of the fund.

21

22	GENERAL FUND	2018-19	2019-20
23	All Other	\$1,000,000	\$0
24 25	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$1,000,000	\$0

26 **Emergency clause.** In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this 27 legislation takes effect when approved.

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SUMMARY

29 This bill establishes and provides funding for the Maine Mental Health Providers Loan Repayment Program to be administered by the Finance Authority of Maine. Under 30 31 the program, all social workers licensed by the State Board of Social Worker Licensure 32 and all counselors licensed by the Board of Counseling Professionals Licensure may apply for student loan repayment assistance, as long as the applicants agree to practice for 33 5 years in one of a list of underserved practice areas in the State. The bill also repeals the 34 35 currently unfunded Social Work Education Loan Repayment Program in the Maine Revised Statutes. 36