

By Senator Jones

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to the Medical Education Reimbursement
3 and Loan Repayment Program; amending s. 1009.65, F.S.;
4 revising the purpose of the program; expanding
5 eligibility criteria for the program to include
6 certain practice areas; requiring practitioners to
7 provide specified proof of eligibility to receive
8 payments under the program; providing an effective
9 date.

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11 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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13 Section 1. Subsection (1) of section 1009.65, Florida
14 Statutes, is amended to read:

15 1009.65 Medical Education Reimbursement and Loan Repayment
16 Program.—

17 (1) To encourage qualified medical professionals to
18 practice in underserved locations where there are shortages of
19 such personnel and to provide primary care to racial and ethnic
20 minority populations that experience health disparities due to
21 limited access to quality health care, there is established the
22 Medical Education Reimbursement and Loan Repayment Program. The
23 function of the program is to make payments that offset loans
24 and educational expenses incurred by students for studies
25 leading to a medical or nursing degree, medical or nursing
26 licensure, or advanced practice registered nurse licensure or
27 physician assistant licensure. The following licensed or
28 certified health care professionals are eligible to participate
29 in this program:

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30 (a) Medical doctors with primary care specialties, doctors
31 of osteopathic medicine with primary care specialties, physician
32 assistants, licensed practical nurses and registered nurses, and
33 advanced practice registered nurses with primary care
34 specialties such as certified nurse midwives. Primary care
35 medical specialties for physicians include obstetrics,
36 gynecology, general and family practice, internal medicine,
37 pediatrics, and other specialties which may be identified by the
38 Department of Health. From the funds available, the Department
39 of Health shall make payments as follows:

40 1. Up to \$4,000 per year for licensed practical nurses and
41 registered nurses, up to \$10,000 per year for advanced practice
42 registered nurses and physician assistants, and up to \$20,000
43 per year for physicians. Penalties for noncompliance shall be
44 the same as those in the National Health Services Corps Loan
45 Repayment Program. Educational expenses include costs for
46 tuition, matriculation, registration, books, laboratory and
47 other fees, other educational costs, and reasonable living
48 expenses as determined by the Department of Health.

49 2. All payments are contingent on continued proof of
50 primary care practice in an area defined in s. 395.602(2)(b)~~7~~ or
51 an underserved area designated by the Department of Health or
52 continued proof of serving racial or ethnic minority
53 populations, provided the practitioner accepts Medicaid
54 reimbursement if eligible for such reimbursement. Correctional
55 facilities, state hospitals, and other state institutions that
56 employ medical personnel shall be designated by the Department
57 of Health as underserved locations. Locations with high
58 incidences of infant mortality, high morbidity, or low Medicaid

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59 participation by health care professionals may be designated as
60 underserved. To receive payments under the program for serving
61 racial and ethnic minority populations, the practitioner must
62 provide proof that at least 50 percent of his or her primary
63 care patient population consists of racial or ethnic minorities
64 in this state.

65 (b) Advanced practice registered nurses registered to
66 engage in autonomous practice under s. 464.0123 and practicing
67 in the primary care specialties of family medicine, general
68 pediatrics, general internal medicine, or midwifery. From the
69 funds available, the Department of Health shall make payments of
70 up to \$15,000 per year to advanced practice registered nurses
71 registered under s. 464.0123 who demonstrate, as required by
72 department rule, active employment providing primary care
73 services to racial or ethnic minority populations or in a public
74 health program, an independent practice, or a group practice
75 that serves Medicaid recipients and other low-income patients
76 and that is located in a primary care health professional
77 shortage area. Only loans to pay the costs of tuition, books,
78 medical equipment and supplies, uniforms, and living expenses
79 may be covered. To receive payments under the program for
80 serving racial and ethnic minority populations, the advanced
81 practice registered nurse must provide proof that at least 50
82 percent of his or her primary care patient population consists
83 of racial or ethnic minorities in this state. For the purposes
84 of this paragraph:

85 1. "Primary care health professional shortage area" means a
86 geographic area, an area having a special population, or a
87 facility with a score of at least 18, as designated and

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88 calculated by the Federal Health Resources and Services
89 Administration or a rural area as defined by the Federal Office
90 of Rural Health Policy.

91 2. "Public health program" means a county health
92 department, the Children's Medical Services program, a federally
93 funded community health center, a federally funded migrant
94 health center, or any other publicly funded or nonprofit health
95 care program designated by the department.

96 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2022.