

AGENCY BILL ANALYSIS - 2026 REGULAR SESSION

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SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

{Indicate if analysis is on an original bill, amendment, substitute or a correction of a previous bill}

Date Prepared: January 17, 2026 **Check all that apply:**
Bill Number: HB 66 **Original** **Correction**
Amendment **Substitute**

Sponsor: Chandler, Figueroa
Short Title: Health Care Professional Loan Fund Changes

Agency Name and Code Number: NM Independent Community Colleges
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SECTION II: FISCAL IMPACT

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY26	FY27		
<u>\$25,000.0</u>		NR	GF

(Parenthesis () indicate expenditure decreases)

SECTION III: NARRATIVE

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis: House Bill 66 (HB 66) provides technical clean up to statute, updates definitions, creates a health professional advisory committee,

Health professionals qualified for consideration for professional loan repayments are professionals licensed pursuant to the medical practice act, physical therapy act, occupational therapy act, speech-language pathology, audiology, hearing-aid dispensing practice act, pharmacy act, nutrition and dietetics practice act, respiratory care act, medical imaging and radiation therapy health and safety act, dental health care act, professional psychologist act, counseling and therapy practice act, nursing practice act, optometry act, or emergency medical services act.

The health professional advisory committee will contain nine members who will serve staggered four year terms. Members will be appointed by:

- One by the secretary of health;
- One by the secretary of the health care authority;

- Four by the secretary of higher education, two must have experience in public post-secondary health and medical education and two are to be representatives of professional health and medical associations;
- Three by the chair of the New Mexico medical board.

The health professional advisory committee is charged with reviewing individual applications for consideration for professional loan repayment, selecting health professionals to receive the professional loan repayment awards – including a suggested award amount.

The higher education department is required to determine the award amount, disburse the funds to selected individuals, assist the selected professionals locating positions in designated shortage areas, and promulgate rules to administer this act.

HB 66 establishes the criteria a health professional must meet in order to be eligible for a professional loan repayment award with highest priority being given to full-time licensed physicians. HB66 establishes loan repayment ceilings with different amounts for established for licensed physicians and other health care providers.

HB 66 gives the higher education department the authority to cancel a professional loan repayment contract for “any reasonable cause deemed sufficient by the department”.

HB 66 changes the penalties the higher education department can impose if an awarded professional does not comply with the contract terms. Under current statute the department shall assess a penalty of three times the full amount of the award plus 18% interest. The penalty is changed to a penalty up to the full amount of the award and a fee of no more than 18% interest of the disbursed award.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

HB 66 appropriates \$25 million from the general fund to the health professional loan repayment fund for expenditure in FY 2027 and subsequent fiscal years. Any unexpended balances do not revert.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

New Mexico has shortages in health care professionals. HB 66 establishes individuals receiving a New Mexico health professional loan for service award must practice in New Mexico, if they currently do not work in New Mexico, the professional is given 90 days from the time of the award to begin working in New Mexico.

HB 66 establishes a preference for physicians, establishing a higher loan repayment ceiling for physicians than other health care professionals.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

Page 10, line 8 – it is unclear what the phrase “designated health professional shortage areas” is tied to.

Health professional shortage area is not defined.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Both medical students and dental students carry high average educational loan debt. According to the American Dental Education Association the average education debt for dentists is \$312,700. According to AAMC the average education debt for medical students is \$212,341. Per HB 66 dentists receiving professional loan repayment would have a lower award ceiling than medical students.

It is unclear how the higher education department will assist awarded health professionals in locating practice positions in designated shortage areas.