

HOUSE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
HOUSE BILL 66

57TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2026

AN ACT

RELATING TO HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL LOAN REPAYMENT; REQUIRING
AWARD RECIPIENTS TO BE HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WHO CURRENTLY
MAINTAIN PRACTICE IN NEW MEXICO OR AGREE TO RELOCATE TO AND
COMMENCE PRACTICE IN NEW MEXICO; REQUIRING THE HIGHER EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT TO DETERMINE AND DISBURSE AWARD AMOUNTS; PROVIDING
ADDITIONAL AWARD CRITERIA; ADDING DEFINITIONS; ALLOWING FEES TO
BE ASSESSED UPON BREACH OF CONTRACT; AMENDING THE HEALTH
PROFESSIONAL LOAN REPAYMENT FUND; REPEALING SECTIONS OF THE
NMSA 1978; MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

SECTION 1. Section 21-22D-3 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1995,
Chapter 144, Section 18, as amended) is amended to read:

"21-22D-3. DEFINITIONS.--As used in the Health
Professional Loan Repayment Act:

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1 A. "award" means the grant of money to repay
2 eligible education debt;

3 ~~[A.]~~ B. "department" means the higher education
4 department;

5 ~~[B.]~~ C. "health professional" means a [physician,
6 optometrist, podiatrist, physician's assistant, dentist, nurse,
7 member of an allied health profession as defined in the Allied
8 Health Student Loan for Service Act or a licensed or certified
9 health professional as determined by the department]
10 professional licensed pursuant to the:

11 (1) Medical Practice Act;

12 (2) Physical Therapy Act;

13 (3) Occupational Therapy Act;

14 (4) Speech-Language Pathology, Audiology and
15 Hearing Aid Dispensing Practices Act;

16 (5) Pharmacy Act;

17 (6) Nutrition and Dietetics Practice Act;

18 (7) Respiratory Care Act;

19 (8) Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy
20 Health and Safety Act;

21 (9) Dental Health Care Act;

22 (10) Professional Psychologist Act;

23 (11) Counseling and Therapy Practice Act;

24 (12) Nursing Practice Act;

25 (13) Optometry Act;

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- 1 (14) Chiropractic Physician Practice Act;
- 2 (15) Dental Amalgam Waste Reduction Act;
- 3 (16) Genetic Counseling Act;
- 4 (17) Polysomnography Practice Act;
- 5 (18) Physician Assistant Act;
- 6 (19) Anesthesiologist Assistants Act;
- 7 (20) Podiatry Act;
- 8 (21) Professional Psychologist Act;
- 9 (22) Pharmacist Prescriptive Authority Act;
- 10 (23) Massage Therapy Practice Act;
- 11 (24) Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine
- 12 Practice Act;
- 13 (25) Social Work Practice Act;
- 14 (26) Emergency Medical Services Act; and
- 15 (27) other health professional licensing acts
- 16 as determined by the department;

17 D. "licensed physician" means a health professional
 18 who is licensed to practice medicine in New Mexico pursuant to
 19 the Medical Practice Act;

20 [~~G.~~] E. "loan" means a grant of money to defray the
 21 costs incidental to a health education, under a contract
 22 between the federal government or a commercial lender and a
 23 health professional, requiring either repayment of principal
 24 and interest or repayment in services; and

25 [~~D.~~] F. "nurse in advanced practice" means a

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1 registered nurse, including a:

2 (1) certified nurse practitioner, certified
3 registered nurse anesthetist or clinical nurse specialist,
4 authorized pursuant to the Nursing Practice Act to function
5 beyond the scope of practice of professional registered
6 nursing; or

7 (2) certified nurse-midwife licensed by the
8 department of health [~~and~~

9 ~~E. "osteopathic primary care physician" means an~~
10 ~~osteopathic physician licensed pursuant to the Medical Practice~~
11 ~~Act with specialty training in family medicine, general~~
12 ~~internal medicine, obstetrics, gynecology or general~~
13 ~~pediatrics]."~~

14 SECTION 2. Section 21-22D-6 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1995,
15 Chapter 144, Section 21, as amended) is amended to read:

16 "21-22D-6. HEALTH PROFESSIONAL LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM--
17 AWARD CRITERIA--CONTRACT TERMS--PAYMENT.--

18 [~~A. Prior to receiving an award, the health~~
19 ~~professional shall file with the higher education department a~~
20 ~~declaration of intent to practice as a health professional in~~
21 ~~areas of New Mexico designated as underserved by the~~
22 ~~department. The department shall consult with the department~~
23 ~~of health when designating areas as underserved.~~

24 ~~B. Award criteria shall provide that:~~

25 (1) ~~amounts shall be dependent upon the~~

1 ~~location of the practice the applicant's total health~~
 2 ~~professional education indebtedness and characteristics of the~~
 3 ~~practice;~~

4 ~~(2) preference in making awards shall be to~~
 5 ~~individuals who have graduated from a New Mexico post-secondary~~
 6 ~~educational institution]~~

7 A. The "health professional loan repayment program"
 8 is created and shall be administered by the department. A
 9 health professional shall apply for an award on a form provided
 10 by the department.

11 B. Health professionals shall be selected to
 12 receive awards based on the following criteria:

13 ~~[(3) recruitment awards]~~ (1) a health
 14 professional shall [be made to eligible participants who agree]
 15 currently maintain practice in New Mexico or have agreed to
 16 relocate to [an approved designated area] and commence practice
 17 in New Mexico within ninety days of the grant of an award. An
 18 award shall not be disbursed until the health professional
 19 commences practice in New Mexico;

20 ~~[(4)]~~ (2) highest priority shall be given to
 21 [participants in practices in which health profession vacancies
 22 are difficult to fill, practices that require after hours call
 23 at least every other night and practices that have heavy
 24 obstetrical responsibilities;

25 ~~(5) award amounts may be modified based upon~~

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1 ~~available funding or other special circumstances; and~~

2 ~~(6) an award shall not exceed the total~~
3 ~~medical education indebtedness of any participant] licensed~~
4 ~~physicians;~~

5 (3) designated health professional shortage
6 areas and a health professional's total eligible education debt
7 and characteristics of the practice; and

8 (4) the number of awards shall be limited to
9 the amount of funds appropriated to the department for the
10 purpose of the health professional loan repayment program.

11 C. Award amounts shall be determined by the
12 department in accordance with the following:

13 (1) funds shall be disbursed in amounts that
14 result in the payment of the full obligation of all awards
15 provided in a given year;

16 (2) an award to a licensed physician shall be
17 a minimum of seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000) per year
18 for four consecutive years, with the exception that:

19 (a) the total award amount shall not
20 exceed the licensed physician's total eligible education debt;

21 (b) the award amount shall be prorated
22 based on a four-year award period; and

23 (c) part-time employment as a licensed
24 physician shall be prorated based on the percentage of hours
25 worked relative to full-time employment; and

1 (3) an award to a health professional other
2 than a licensed physician shall:

3 (a) not exceed the health professional's
4 total eligible education debt;

5 (b) be prorated based on a three-year
6 award period; and

7 (c) be prorated based on the percentage
8 of hours relative to full-time employment if the health
9 professional maintains part-time employment in the health
10 professional's respective health profession.

11 D. The department shall encumber the full amount of
12 the award during the first year of a health professional's
13 award period at a published schedule as determined by the
14 department.

15 [~~G.~~] E. The following education debts are not
16 eligible for repayment pursuant to the Health Professional Loan
17 Repayment Act:

18 (1) amounts incurred as a result of
19 participation in state loan-for-service programs or other state
20 programs whose purpose states that service be provided in
21 exchange for financial assistance;

22 (2) scholarships that have a service component
23 or obligation;

24 (3) personal loans [~~from friends or~~
25 ~~relatives~~]; and

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1 (4) loans that exceed individual standard
2 school expense levels.

3 [~~D.~~] F. The loan repayment award shall be evidenced
4 by a contract between the health professional and the
5 department acting on behalf of the state. The contract shall
6 provide for the payment by the state of a stated sum to the
7 health professional's debtors and shall state the obligations
8 of the health professional under the program, including a
9 minimum ~~[three-year]~~ four-year period of service for licensed
10 physicians and three-year period of service for health
11 professionals other than licensed physicians, quarterly
12 reporting requirements and other policies established by the
13 department. The department may cancel the contract made
14 between the department and the health professional for any
15 reasonable cause deemed sufficient by the department.

16 [~~E.~~] G. Recipients shall serve a complete year in
17 order to receive credit for that year. The minimum credit for
18 a year shall be established by the department.

19 [~~F.~~] H. If a health professional does not comply
20 with the terms of the contract, the department shall assess [~~a~~
21 ~~penalty of]~~ up to [~~three-times]~~ the full amount of award
22 disbursed [~~plus eighteen]~~ and may assess a fee of no more than
23 eighteen percent interest of the amount of the award disbursed,
24 unless the department finds acceptable extenuating
25 circumstances for why the health professional cannot serve or

1 comply with the terms of the contract. If the department does
 2 not find acceptable extenuating circumstances for the health
 3 professional's failure to comply with the contract, the
 4 department shall require immediate repayment [~~plus the amount~~
 5 ~~of the penalty~~].

6 [~~G.~~] I. The department shall [~~adopt regulations~~]
 7 promulgate rules to implement the provisions of this section
 8 [~~the regulations~~] that may provide for the disbursement of
 9 [~~loan repayment~~] awards to the lenders of health professionals
 10 in annual or other periodic installments."

11 **SECTION 3.** Section 21-22D-7 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1995,
 12 Chapter 144, Section 22) is amended to read:

13 "21-22D-7. **CONTRACTS--ENFORCEMENT.--**The general form of
 14 the contract required shall be prepared and approved by the
 15 attorney general and signed by the health professional and the
 16 designated representative of the [~~commission~~] department on
 17 behalf of the state. The [~~commission~~] department is vested
 18 with full and complete authority and power to sue in its own
 19 name for any balance due the state from any student on any such
 20 contract."

21 **SECTION 4.** Section 21-22D-8 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1995,
 22 Chapter 144, Section 23) is amended to read:

23 "21-22D-8. HEALTH PROFESSIONAL LOAN REPAYMENT FUND
 24 CREATED--PURPOSE--METHOD OF PAYMENT.--

25 A. The "health professional loan repayment fund" is
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1 created as a nonreverting fund in the state treasury. [~~All~~
2 ~~money appropriated for the health professional loan repayment~~
3 ~~program shall be credited to the fund, and all payments for~~
4 ~~penalties or repayment of awards received by the commission~~
5 ~~shall be credited to the fund or shall be deposited with the~~
6 ~~commission's administrative agent. All payments for loan~~
7 ~~repayment awards shall be made upon vouchers signed by the~~
8 ~~designated representative of the commission and upon warrant~~
9 ~~issued by the secretary of finance and administration.] The
10 fund consists of appropriations, distributions, gifts and
11 grants. The department shall administer the fund, and money in
12 the fund is appropriated to the department to provide awards
13 pursuant to the Health Professional Loan Repayment Act;
14 provided that:~~

15 (1) no less than fifty percent of the
16 available funds in the health professional loan repayment fund
17 as of the beginning of each fiscal year shall be encumbered for
18 licensed physicians who receive an award; and

19 (2) funds that are encumbered but unexpended
20 shall be used for awards in the next fiscal year.

21 B. Disbursements from the fund shall be made by
22 warrant of the secretary of finance and administration pursuant
23 to vouchers signed by the secretary of higher education or the
24 secretary's authorized representative."

25 SECTION 5. Section 21-22D-10 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1995,

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1 Chapter 144, Section 25) is amended to read:

2 "21-22D-10. REPORTS.--~~[The commission]~~ By December 31 of
 3 each year, the department shall make annual reports to the
 4 governor and to the legislature ~~[prior to each regular session]~~
 5 of its activities, the ~~[loan repayment awards]~~ amount of each
 6 award granted, [the names and addresses of loan repayment award
 7 recipients, the names and locations of the practices of those
 8 health professionals who are serving in a designated health
 9 professional shortage area of the state pursuant to the Health
 10 Professional Loan Repayment Act and the name of each loan
 11 repayment award recipient who is not serving in a designated
 12 health professional shortage area, the reason the person is not
 13 servng and the amount owed and paid on the loan and loan
 14 repayment award] the cumulative total award amount, the number
 15 of awards made by profession type and the county and
 16 municipality where each health professional that received an
 17 award practices in the state."

18 SECTION 6. REPEAL.--Sections 21-22D-2 and 21-22D-9 NMSA
 19 1978 (being Laws 1995, Chapter 144, Sections 17 and 24) are
 20 repealed.

21 SECTION 7. APPROPRIATION.--Twenty-five million dollars
 22 (\$25,000,000) is appropriated from the general fund to the
 23 health professional loan repayment fund for expenditure in
 24 fiscal year 2027 and subsequent fiscal years to make awards
 25 pursuant to the Health Professional Loan Repayment Act. Any

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1 unexpended balance remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall
2 not revert to the general fund.

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