

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; providing an effective date.

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

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

12 1009.65 Medical Education Reimbursement and Loan Repayment
 13 Program.—

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

26 in this program:

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

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

46 2. All payments are contingent on continued proof of
47 primary care practice in an area defined in s. 395.602(2)(b) ~~or~~ or
48 an underserved area designated by the Department of Health or
49 continued proof of serving racial or ethnic minority
50 populations, provided the practitioner accepts Medicaid

51 reimbursement if eligible for such reimbursement. Correctional
52 facilities, state hospitals, and other state institutions that
53 employ medical personnel shall be designated by the Department
54 of Health as underserved locations. Locations with high
55 incidences of infant mortality, high morbidity, or low Medicaid
56 participation by health care professionals may be designated as
57 underserved. To receive payments under the program for serving
58 racial and ethnic minority populations, the practitioner must
59 provide proof that at least 50 percent of his or her primary
60 care patient population consists of racial or ethnic minorities
61 in this state.

62 (b) Advanced practice registered nurses registered to
63 engage in autonomous practice under s. 464.0123 and practicing
64 in the primary care specialties of family medicine, general
65 pediatrics, general internal medicine, or midwifery. From the
66 funds available, the Department of Health shall make payments of
67 up to \$15,000 per year to advanced practice registered nurses
68 registered under s. 464.0123 who demonstrate, as required by
69 department rule, active employment providing primary care
70 services to racial or ethnic minority populations or in a public
71 health program, an independent practice, or a group practice
72 that serves Medicaid recipients and other low-income patients
73 and that is located in a primary care health professional
74 shortage area. Only loans to pay the costs of tuition, books,
75 medical equipment and supplies, uniforms, and living expenses

76 | may be covered. To receive payments under the program for
77 | servicing racial and ethnic minority populations, the advanced
78 | practice registered nurse must provide proof that at least 50
79 | percent of his or her primary care patient population consists
80 | of racial or ethnic minorities in this state. For the purposes
81 | of this paragraph:

82 | 1. "Primary care health professional shortage area" means
83 | a geographic area, an area having a special population, or a
84 | facility with a score of at least 18, as designated and
85 | calculated by the Federal Health Resources and Services
86 | Administration or a rural area as defined by the Federal Office
87 | of Rural Health Policy.

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

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