

CHAPTER 226

(HB 573)

AN ACT relating to healthcare workers and declaring an emergency.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

➔SECTION 1. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 164 IS CREATED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:

- (1) *The General Assembly hereby establishes the statewide Healthcare Worker Loan Relief Program designed to be in alignment with the federally funded state loan repayment program authorized under KRS 211.165 in providing student loan repayment for eligible healthcare workers within the Commonwealth. The Healthcare Worker Loan Relief Program shall be administered by the University of Kentucky through the Center of Excellence in Rural Health, and all costs associated with the program, including the reimbursement of any expenses incurred by the center in its administration of the program, shall be funded by state appropriations and other funds held in the healthcare worker loan relief fund, which shall be excluded from the comprehensive funding model established in KRS 164.092.*
- (2) *The board of trustees of the University of Kentucky, on behalf of the Center of Excellence in Rural Health, shall adopt policies for the administration of the program that are in alignment with the policies implemented in the administration of KRS 211.165 and the federally funded state loan repayment program it authorizes, and shall include:*
 - (a) *The professional, certification, education, employment, and worksite eligibility requirements, except that the professional requirements shall also grant eligibility to ophthalmologists, optometrists, and audiologists;*
 - (b) *Student loan eligibility requirements;*
 - (c) *A process to consider applications from eligible healthcare workers, except the policy shall include an application cycle that is open at least biannually;*
 - (d) *Program admission guidelines;*
 - (e) *The conditions under which admitted healthcare workers shall receive awards;*
 - (f) *To the extent that funding is available, the process for determining award amounts, which shall include the tiering of award amounts based on provider type, student loan amounts, and other factors, except that the policy shall not require a dollar-for-dollar match component from admitted healthcare workers' employers; and*
 - (g) *Procedures to provide repayment to loan servicers.*
- (3) *(a) The healthcare worker loan relief fund is hereby created as a trust fund in the State Treasury to be administered by the University of Kentucky on behalf of the Center of Excellence in Rural Health for the purpose of providing loan repayment as described in this section.*
 - (b) *The trust fund shall consist of state general fund appropriations, gifts and grants from public and private sources, and federal funds. All moneys included in the fund shall be appropriated for the purposes set forth in this section.*
 - (c) *Any unallotted or unencumbered balances in the trust fund shall be invested as provided in KRS 42.500(9). Income earned from the investments shall be credited to the trust fund.*
 - (d) *Notwithstanding KRS 45.229, any fund balance at the close of the fiscal year shall not lapse but shall be carried forward to the next fiscal year and continuously appropriated only for the purposes specified in this section.*

➔Section 2. KRS 164.937 is amended to read as follows:

- (1) The University of Kentucky shall maintain a Center of Excellence in Rural Health.
- (2) The mission of the Center of Excellence in Rural Health shall be the improvement of the health of all rural Kentuckians and the improvement of rural health care systems through education, research, and service.
- (3) The Center of Excellence in Rural Health shall:

- (a) Support a site-based director, core faculty, and staff;
 - (b) Collect and maintain statistical and other information relating to rural health status, rural health care systems, rural health policy, and other issues affecting the health and well-being of rural populations;
 - (c) Collect, analyze, interpret, disseminate, and make recommendations regarding the availability, distribution, and sufficiency of the health professions workforce;
 - (d) Provide educational opportunities for students committed to rural health care:
 1. To obtain education in needed health professions as determined by the workforce analyses, rotating these programs as necessary;
 2. By testing and developing innovative models for learning; and
 3. By reserving funds budgeted for specific educational programs that in the future are deemed no longer necessary for use for educational programs for other health professions;
 - (e) Maintain site-based family practice residencies;
 - (f) Serve as the federally designated Office of Rural Health and perform the duties prescribed by the United States Health Resources and Services Administration;
 - (g) ***Administer the Healthcare Worker Loan Relief Program established under Section 1 of this Act;***
 - ~~(h)(g)~~ Demonstrate or provide innovative programs that improve the health of rural Kentuckians and strengthen rural health care systems; and
 - ~~(i)(h)~~ Advocate for rural health care.
- (4) To the extent additional funds are appropriated, the Center of Excellence in Rural Health shall establish additional sites throughout the Commonwealth as necessary to achieve the mission of the center.
- (5) Nothing in this section shall be construed to restrict the study of rural health policies, workforce analyses, or the training of health professionals in or for rural or medically underserved areas by other state universities.
- (6) The University of Kentucky shall report to the Council on Postsecondary Education and the Legislative Research Commission a detailed, audited statement of expenditures for each program function in the Center of Excellence for Rural Health Care by September 1 of each year which enumerates expenditures for the preceding fiscal year.

➔Section 3. Whereas there is currently a shortage of healthcare workers in the Commonwealth, an emergency is declared to exist, and this Act takes effect upon its passage and approval by the Governor or upon its otherwise becoming a law.

Signed by Governor April 20, 2022.