

131st MAINE LEGISLATURE

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No. 632

H.P. 409

House of Representatives, February 14, 2023

An Act to Amend the Social Work Education Loan Repayment Program

Reference to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs suggested and ordered printed.

ROBERT B. HUNT Clerk

R(+ B. Hunt

Presented by Representative CRAFTS of Newcastle.

Cosponsored by Representatives: ARFORD of Brunswick, DODGE of Belfast, GRAMLICH of Old Orchard Beach, PERRY of Calais, ZAGER of Portland, Senator: RENY of Lincoln.

2 3	Sec. 1. 10 MRSA §1038, sub-§3, ¶B, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 427, §1, is amended to read:
4 5 6	B. Have completed a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree in social work from an accredited school of social work within 3 years prior to the date the applicant's application is received by the authority;
7 8	Sec. 2. 10 MRSA §1038, sub-§3, ¶D, as corrected by RR 2009, c. 1, §11, is amended to read:
9 10	D. Practice in an underserved practice area, including but not limited to the practice of social work:
11	(1) In a public or private child welfare or family service agency;
12	(2) In a public interest law service;
13	(3) In a public child care facility;
14	(4) In a public service for individuals with disabilities;
15	(5) In a public service for the elderly;
16	(6) In a public service for veterans; θε
17 18	(7) At an organization exempt from taxation under the United States Internal Revenue Code, Section 501(c)(3)::
19	(8) In the criminal justice or correctional system; or
20 21	(9) In private practice and at least 15% of professional time is spent providing services to clients covered by Medicare or the MaineCare program.
22 23 24	Priority consideration must be given to social workers practicing in a public or private child welfare or family service agency, in a public service for the elderly or in a public service for individuals with disabilities;
25 26 27 28	The authority shall establish a system of priority for participation in the program. The authority shall solicit input from stakeholders, including social work faculty and students and the leadership of groups representing the interests of social workers, in the development of the system of priority and in changes to the application process;
29 30	Sec. 3. 10 MRSA §1038, sub-§3, ¶E, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 427, §1, is amended to read:
31 32 33	E. Submit an application to the authority, which must include but is not limited to information concerning academic performance, awards and special honors and community involvement; and
34 35	Sec. 4. 10 MRSA §1038, sub-§3, ¶F, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 427, §1, is amended to read:
36 37 38	F. Have signed a statement of intent in a form acceptable to the authority to work as a social worker in the State serving residents of this State for a minimum of 3 years after acceptance into the program.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

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Sec. 5. 10 MRSA §1038, sub-§5, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 427, §1, is amended to read:

5. Administration. The program and the fund are administered by the authority. The authority shall repay the loans of up to $3\ \underline{100}$ applicants each year who meet the criteria in subsection 3 in the amount of up to $55,000\ \underline{$20,000}$ for each applicant. The authority may adopt rules to carry out the purposes of this subchapter. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules pursuant to Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

SUMMARY

This bill eliminates the requirement that participants in the Social Work Education Loan Repayment Program have completed a social work degree within 3 years of the date of application for the program. The bill adds to the list of practice areas available for participation in the program. The bill replaces the current priority consideration in the program with one developed by the Finance Authority of Maine with stakeholder input and also requires stakeholder input on changes to the application process. The bill requires a participant to serve residents of this State, increases the number of loans repaid each year and increases the amount of repayment for each participant.