

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 2382 Session of 2024

INTRODUCED BY RAPP, FRANKEL, ROWE, VENKAT, ZIMMERMAN, STEHR, M. BROWN, SCHLOSSBERG, COOK, CAUSER, KINSEY, CONKLIN, MERSKI, ROSSI, OBERLANDER, DALEY, PICKETT, GILLEN, KUZMA AND KHAN, JUNE 5, 2024

AS REPORTED FROM COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AS AMENDED, JUNE 26, 2024

AN ACT

1 Providing for grant awards to entities in rural counties and
2 designated medically underserved areas to pay for the
3 education debt of ~~physicians and nurses~~ PRACTITIONERS
4 employed at the entity. <--

5 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
6 hereby enacts as follows:

7 Section 1. Short title.

8 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Rural Health
9 Care Grant Program Act.

10 Section 2. Legislative intent.

11 It is the intent of the General Assembly through this
12 legislation to:

13 (1) Allow entities in designated medically underserved
14 areas and rural areas to have an opportunity to recruit and
15 retain high quality ~~physicians and nurses~~ PRACTITIONERS. <--

16 (2) Have more ~~physicians and nurses~~ PRACTITIONERS <--
17 available to practice in designated medically underserved

1 areas and rural areas.

2 (3) Give patients in designated medically underserved  
3 areas and rural areas more access to ~~physicians and nurses~~ <--  
4 PRACTITIONERS. <--

5 (4) Prevent the possible closure of entities in  
6 designated medically underserved areas and rural areas due to  
7 ~~physician or nurse~~ PRACTITIONER shortages. <--

8 Section 3. Definitions.

9 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall  
10 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the  
11 context clearly indicates otherwise:

12 "Birth center." As defined in section 802.1 of the act of  
13 July 19, 1979 (P.L.130, No.48), known as the Health Care  
14 Facilities Act.

15 "Department." The Department of Health of the Commonwealth.

16 "Designated medically underserved area." The term shall mean  
17 the same as defined under section 1301 of the act of December 2,  
18 1992 (P.L.741, No.113), known as the Children's Health Care Act.

19 "Education debt." Debt incurred for ~~graduate level~~ <--  
20 PROFESSIONAL schooling to practice as a ~~physician or nurse~~ <--  
21 PRACTITIONER in this Commonwealth. <--

22 "Entity." A birth center, a federally qualified health  
23 center, A RURAL HEALTH CLINIC or a hospital. <--

24 "Federally qualified health center." As defined in 42 U.S.C.  
25 § 1396d(1)(2)(B) (relating to definitions). The term includes a  
26 federally qualified health center look-alike.

27 "Full-time." A ~~physician or nurse~~ PRACTITIONER who works on <--  
28 average more than 30 hours per week or more than 130 hours per  
29 month.

30 "Grant." A sum of money that is awarded to an entity by the

1 department under this act.

2 "Hospital." A general acute care or specialty hospital  
3 located in a designated medically underserved area or rural  
4 county.

5 "Licensed practical nurse." An individual licensed to  
6 practice practical nursing under the act of March 2, 1956 (1955  
7 P.L.1211, No.376), known as the Practical Nurse Law.

8 "MIDWIFE OR NURSE-MIDWIFE." AS DEFINED IN SECTION 2 OF THE <--  
9 ACT OF DECEMBER 20, 1985 (P.L.457, NO.112), KNOWN AS THE MEDICAL  
10 PRACTICE ACT OF 1985.

11 "Nurse." A licensed practical nurse or registered nurse.

12 "Physician." Either:

13 (1) as defined in section 2 of the act of October 5,  
14 1978 (P.L.1109, No.261), known as the Osteopathic Medical  
15 Practice Act; or

16 (2) as defined in section 2 of the ~~act of December 20,~~ <--  
17 ~~1985 (P.L.457, No.112), known as the~~ Medical Practice Act of  
18 1985.

19 "PRACTITIONER." A PHYSICIAN, NURSE OR MIDWIFE OR NURSE- <--  
20 MIDWIFE.

21 "Program." The Rural Health Care Grant Program established  
22 under section 4.

23 "Registered nurse." An individual licensed to practice  
24 professional nursing under the act of May 22, 1951 (P.L.317,  
25 No.69), known as The Professional Nursing Law.

26 "Rural county." A county within this Commonwealth where the  
27 population density is less than 284 persons per square mile as  
28 defined by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania.

29 "RURAL HEALTH CLINIC." AS DEFINED IN 42 U.S.C. § 1395X(AA) <--  
30 (2) (RELATING TO DEFINITIONS) AND CERTIFIED BY MEDICARE.

1 Section 4. Establishment.

2 The Rural Health Care Grant Program is established in the  
3 department to be administered by the department.

4 Section 5. Use of money.

5 (a) Duty of department.--The department shall distribute  
6 grants to an entity in accordance with this act from money  
7 appropriated for the program by the General Assembly.

8 (b) Distribution by entity.--An entity shall use money  
9 granted under subsection (a) to pay for education debt of  
10 ~~physicians or nurses~~ PRACTITIONERS that the entity employs <--  
11 according to the following:

12 (1) An entity shall pay the applicable creditor or  
13 designated person of the education debt on behalf of the  
14 ~~physician or nurse~~ PRACTITIONER. <--

15 (2) Within 30 days after disbursement of money to the  
16 applicable creditor or designated person, an entity shall  
17 report to the department the following:

18 (i) The date the payment was sent to the applicable  
19 creditor or designated person.

20 (ii) The amount of the payment.

21 (iii) The name and address of the applicable  
22 creditor or designated person.

23 (iv) The names of the ~~physicians and nurses~~ <--  
24 PRACTITIONERS whose education debt was paid by the entity <--  
25 with the grant money.

26 (c) Receipt.--A written or electronic receipt of payment of  
27 education debt shall be issued to a ~~physician or nurse~~ <--  
28 PRACTITIONER employed by the entity whose education debt was <--  
29 paid by a grant under this act.

30 Section 6. Grant awards.

1 (a) Criteria for grant from department.--The department  
2 shall award a grant to an entity that is located in a designated  
3 medically underserved area or rural county. Priority shall be  
4 given to independent entities not owned by, managed by or  
5 affiliated with any health care system, A LEGALLY SEPARATE <--  
6 health care provider or other entity.

7 (b) Limitation of awards.--

8 (1) The department may not award more than \$250,000 to  
9 an entity in one calendar year.

10 (2) The amount distributed to a ~~physician or nurse~~ <--  
11 PRACTITIONER may not exceed the amount owed in education <--  
12 debt.

13 (c) Entity award.--An entity shall award the grant money  
14 received from the department to one or more chosen ~~physicians or~~ <--  
15 ~~nurses~~ PRACTITIONERS who are employed by the entity. In order to <--  
16 receive a payment of education debt, a ~~physician or nurse~~ <--  
17 PRACTITIONER must: <--

18 (1) Work a minimum of three years in the entity that  
19 provides the grant money to pay for education debt.

20 (2) Be licensed to practice as a ~~physician or nurse~~ <--  
21 PRACTITIONER in this Commonwealth under the applicable <--  
22 licensing board of the Department of State.

23 (3) Begin work within six months of accepting a position  
24 with the entity paying for the education debt.

25 (4) Be employed as a full-time ~~physician or nurse~~ <--  
26 PRACTITIONER for the entity providing the grant. <--

27 Section 7. Entity application for a grant.

28 (a) General rule.--Applications shall:

29 (1) Be submitted by an entity to the department in a  
30 manner the department deems appropriate.

1 (2) Be available electronically.

2 (3) Include documentation as deemed necessary by the  
3 department.

4 (b) Certification.--An entity shall certify in good faith  
5 that the information provided in the application and all  
6 supporting documents and forms are true and accurate in all  
7 material aspects. An entity, or an authorized representative of  
8 the entity, that knowingly makes a false statement to obtain a  
9 grant shall be subject to 18 Pa.C.S. § 4904 (relating to unsworn  
10 falsification to authorities).

11 Section 8. Review of application.

12 (a) Selection.--The department shall select an appropriate  
13 number of entities to receive a grant under this act each  
14 calendar year, dependent upon the amount of money appropriated  
15 for the program by the General Assembly.

16 (b) Approval or disapproval.--No later than 60 days after an  
17 entity's submission OR RESUBMISSION of an application, the <--  
18 department shall approve or deny the application for a grant.  
19 The department shall provide a notice to the entity that:

20 (1) the application for a grant is approved for an  
21 amount determined by the department; or

22 (2) the application for a grant is denied. The  
23 department shall provide its reasons for denial of the  
24 application. The entity may resubmit its application based  
25 upon the department's reasons for denying the application.

26 Section 9. Grant agreements.

27 Upon approval of an application under section 8, the  
28 department shall enter into a grant agreement with the entity to  
29 award a grant under this act. The grant agreement shall explain  
30 the terms and conditions of the grant, including the applicable

1 laws of this Commonwealth and all reporting requirements. The  
2 department, an entity and any other necessary party, as  
3 determined by the department, may enter into the grant agreement  
4 via electronic signature.

5 Section 10. Disbursement of grants.

6 The following shall apply to the disbursement of grants:

7 (1) The department shall determine the number of grants  
8 to be awarded with the money appropriated by the General  
9 Assembly.

10 (2) ~~The~~ FOR APPROVED GRANTS, THE department shall award <--  
11 a grant to an entity in ~~\$10,000 increments~~. INCREMENTS OF <--  
12 \$10,000 UP TO THE LIMIT UNDER SECTION 6(B)(1). THE DEPARTMENT  
13 MAY AWARD A GRANT OF LESS THAN \$10,000 IF THE DEPARTMENT  
14 DETERMINES THAT A DECREASE IS NECESSARY TO PRESERVE ADEQUATE  
15 FUNDING FOR MORE GRANTS.

16 (3) An entity shall report to the department the initial  
17 date of employment for each ~~physician or nurse~~ PRACTITIONER <--  
18 who receives payment of education debt and the departure from  
19 employment date for each ~~physician or nurse~~ PRACTITIONER, if <--  
20 applicable.

21 (4) The department shall begin disbursement of grant  
22 money to an entity within ~~60~~ 90 days after the approval of an <--  
23 entity's application.

24 Section 11. Reports.

25 (a) Content.--No later than December 31 of each year, the  
26 department shall publish a report on its publicly accessible  
27 Internet website that contains the following information:

28 (1) The number of grants awarded under this act.

29 (2) The number of ~~physicians and nurses~~ PRACTITIONERS <--  
30 who received a payment of their education debt.

1           (3) The license type and practice area of each ~~physician~~ <--  
2 ~~and nurse~~ PRACTITIONER, as applicable. <--

3           (4) The name and address of each entity that received a  
4 grant under this act.

5           (5) The amount of each grant awarded.

6           (6) The total amount of the appropriation distributed  
7 each calendar year.

8           (7) An aggregate total for each designated medically  
9 underserved area or rural county where a ~~physician or nurse~~ <--  
10 PRACTITIONER awarded grant money is employed by an entity. <--

11       (b) Confidentiality.--The name, address and other personal  
12 information of a ~~physician or nurse~~ PRACTITIONER who received <--  
13 money from an entity awarded a grant by the department may not  
14 be listed on the department's publicly accessible Internet  
15 website and may not be considered accessible under the act of  
16 February 14, 2008 (P.L.6, No.3), known as the Right-to-Know Law.

17       (c) Submission.--The department shall submit the report  
18 under subsection (a) to the following:

19           (1) The chair and minority chair of the Appropriations  
20 Committee of the Senate.

21           (2) The chair and minority chair of the Appropriations  
22 Committee of the House of Representatives.

23           (3) The chair and minority chair of the Health and Human  
24 Services Committee of the Senate.

25           (4) The chair and minority chair of the Health Committee  
26 of the House of Representatives.

27       (d) Final report.--After disbursement of all money  
28 appropriated for the program, the department shall publish a  
29 final report with the information listed under this section  
30 within six months.



1 Section 12. Tax applicability.

2 Grants awarded under this act may not be considered taxable  
3 income to an entity, ~~physician or nurse~~ OR PRACTITIONER under <--  
4 the act of March 4, 1971 (P.L.6, No.2), known as the Tax Reform  
5 Code of 1971.

6 Section 13. Compliance.

7 (a) Reimbursement for noncompliance.--The department shall  
8 determine compliance with the requirements of this act. If an  
9 entity, ~~physician or nurse~~ OR PRACTITIONER fails to comply with <--  
10 the requirements of this act, the entity, ~~physician or nurse~~ OR <--  
11 PRACTITIONER shall reimburse the Commonwealth for the amount of  
12 the grant received or awarded BASED ON THE PERIOD OF <--  
13 NONCOMPLIANCE, including interest accrued, as determined by the  
14 department based on a determination of which party violated this  
15 act. The department, entity, ~~physician or nurse~~ AND PRACTITIONER <--  
16 shall make every effort to resolve conflicts in order to prevent  
17 a breach of the program requirements established by the  
18 department.

19 (b) Agreement between entity and employee.--An entity that  
20 receives a grant under this act may require a ~~physician or nurse~~ <--  
21 PRACTITIONER awarded money to enter into an agreement <--  
22 established by the entity and determine ~~any~~ compliance, <--  
23 including the timing of disbursement of the grant money, AS <--  
24 APPROPRIATE TO FACILITATE THE PURPOSES AND INTENT OF THIS ACT  
25 AND subject to the requirements of this act.

26 Section 14. Effective date.

27 This act shall take effect in 120 days.