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H.293

Introduced by Representative Rachelson of Burlington

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Health; mental health; substance use; loan forgiveness

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create a  
Mental Health and Addiction Services Loan Forgiveness and Development  
Program.

An act relating to Mental Health and Addiction Services Loan Forgiveness  
and Development Program

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. 18 V.S.A. chapter 96 is added to read:

CHAPTER 96. MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES LOAN

FORGIVENESS AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

§ 4831. DEFINITIONS

As used in this section:

(1) “Alcohol and drug abuse counselor” means the same as in 26 V.S.A.

§ 3231.

1           (2) “Board” means the Mental Health and Addiction Services Loan  
2           Forgiveness and Development Programs Board established in section 4832 of  
3           this title.

4           (3) “Mental health professional” means the same as in section 7101 of  
5           this title.

6           § 4832. MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES LOAN

7                   FORGIVENESS AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD

8           (a) Creation. There is created the Mental Health and Addiction Services  
9           Loan Forgiveness and Development Board (Board) to establish and oversee a  
10           loan forgiveness and workforce development program designed to attract  
11           mental health professionals and alcohol and drug abuse counselors to Vermont.

12           (b) Membership. The Board shall be composed of the following members:

13                   (1) the dean of the University of Vermont College of Medicine or  
14                   designee, who shall serve as Chair;

15                   (2) the Chair of the University of Vermont College of Medicine’s  
16                   Department of Psychiatry or designee;

17                   (3) the Commissioner of Mental Health or designee;

18                   (4) the Commissioner of Health or designee;

19                   (5) a psychologist practicing in Vermont, appointed by the Governor;

20                   (6) an advanced practice registered nurse specializing in psychiatric care  
21           practicing in Vermont, appointed by the Governor;

1           (7) the administrator of a program in an institution of higher education  
2           in Vermont engaged in training alcohol and drug abuse counselors, appointed  
3           by the Governor; and

4           (8) the director of the Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs or designee.

5           (c) Powers and duties. The Board shall govern a loan forgiveness and  
6           workforce development program in Vermont, including:

7           (1) The oversight and implementation of a loan forgiveness and  
8           workforce development program designed to attract mental health  
9           professionals and alcohol and drug abuse counselors to Vermont by assisting  
10          these providers to pay off school loans incurred obtaining training necessary to  
11          practice in Vermont. In exchange for a loan forgiveness grant, mental health  
12          professionals and alcohol and drug abuse counselors shall commit to practicing  
13          in a designated hospital, designated agency, specialized service agency,  
14          preferred provider setting, or any other setting deemed eligible by the Board.

15          (2) The development and oversight of a mental health and addiction  
16          services residency training track program through the University of Vermont  
17          College of Medicine's Department of Psychiatry.

18          (d) Assistance. The Board shall have the administrative, technical, and  
19          legal assistance of the Departments of Health and of Mental Health.

20          (e) Report. Annually on or before January 15, the Board shall submit a  
21          written report to the House Committees on Health Care and on Human

1 Services and the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare with a summary of  
2 its activities and any findings and any recommendations for legislative action.

3 (f) Meetings.

4 (1) The Chair shall call the first meeting of the Board to occur on or  
5 before September 30, 2017.

6 (2) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

7 (3) The Board shall meet at least quarterly at the call of the Chair.

8 (g) Reimbursement. Members of the Board who are not employees of the  
9 State of Vermont and who are not otherwise compensated or reimbursed for  
10 their attendance shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement  
11 of expenses pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for no more than four meetings.

12 § 4833. MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES LOAN

13 FORGIVENESS AND DEVELOPMENT FUND

14 (a) There is created a Mental Health and Addiction Services Loan  
15 Forgiveness and Development Fund (Fund) for the purpose of providing grants  
16 for school loan repayment and for funding residency positions and fellowship  
17 training pursuant to this chapter. The Fund shall be administered by the Board.

18 (b) The Fund may be composed of:

19 (1) appropriations made by the General Assembly;

20 (2) grants; and

21 (3) gifts and bequests.

1       (c) Any costs incurred from administering the Fund shall be paid from  
2       monies in the Fund.

3       (d) Interest that accrues from these investments shall be deposited in the  
4       General Fund.

5       (e) The Board shall annually use monies in the Fund to provide loan  
6       forgiveness grants to eligible participants and to fund residency positions  
7       pursuant to this title. Fund expenditures shall not exceed available revenues,  
8       except that the Commissioner of Finance and Management may anticipate  
9       receipts to the Fund and issue warrants based thereon, and in so doing may  
10       establish limits on expenditures in anticipation of receipts to the Fund.

11       (f) Monies in the Fund at the end of a State fiscal year shall not revert to  
12       the General Fund.

13       § 4834. LOAN FORGIVENESS; PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY

14       The Board shall establish eligibility guidelines for mental health  
15       professionals and drug and alcohol counselors seeking to participate in the  
16       Mental Health and Addiction Services Loan Forgiveness and Development  
17       Program, including:

18               (1) a participant shall not receive more than \$25,000.00 annually;

19               (2) except as provided in subdivision (3) of this section, a participant  
20       shall not receive loan forgiveness grants for more than four years;

1           (3) a participant who is a psychiatrist pursuing a fellowship training and  
2           certification in addiction psychiatry shall not receive grants for more than five  
3           years;

4           (4) a participant shall commit to at least a full year of service in a  
5           designated hospital, designated agency, specialized service agency, in a  
6           preferred provider setting, or setting deemed eligible by the Board for each  
7           year that a loan forgiveness grant is awarded; and

8           (5) a participant shall be a mental health professional or drug and  
9           alcohol counselor who is either:

10           (A)(i) a resident of Vermont; and

11           (ii) accepting a new position in Vermont; or

12           (B)(i) a resident from a state other than Vermont;

13           (ii) neither currently practicing in Vermont, nor having practiced  
14           in Vermont during the three years prior to applying for the program; and

15           (iii) accepting a new position in Vermont.

16           § 4835. RESIDENCY TRAINING PROGRAM; PARTICIPANT

17           ELIGIBILITY

18           The Board shall develop standards of participation for the residency training  
19           track of the Mental Health and Addiction Services Loan Forgiveness and  
20           Development Program, including guidelines for:

1           (1) program eligibility, including the requirement that a psychiatrist  
2           pursuing fellowship training and certification in addiction psychiatry shall be  
3           required to establish a new practice in Vermont for at least five years upon  
4           completion of the fellowship; and

5           (2) the amounts of grants and other assistance available to participants.

6           Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

7           This act shall take effect on July 1, 2017.