

1 S.196

2 Introduced by Senators Hooker, Chittenden, Collamore, Cummings, Hardy,

3 Lyons, Pollina, Ram Hinsdale, Starr and Terenzini

4 Referred to Committee on

5 Date:

6 Subject: Health; workforce; dental hygienists; dental assistants

7 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to: (1) provide  
8 relocation assistance to dental hygienists; (2) provide tuition assistance to  
9 prospective dental hygienists and certificate-level dental assistants; and  
10 (3) provide loan repayment assistance to dental hygienists and certificate-level  
11 dental assistants employed in a Vermont dental practice.

12 An act relating to relocation assistance, tuition assistance, and loan  
13 repayment for dental professionals

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

15 \* \* \* Relocation Assistance \* \* \*

16 Sec. 1. 10 V.S.A. § 4 is amended to read:

17 § 4. NEW RELOCATING EMPLOYEE INCENTIVES

18 (a) The Agency of Commerce and Community Development shall design  
19 and implement a program to award incentive grants to relocating employees as

1 provided in this section and subject to the policies and procedures the Agency  
2 adopts to implement the program.

3 \* \* \*

4 (e) As used in this section:

5 \* \* \*

6 (2) “Relocating employee” means an individual who meets the  
7 following criteria:

8 (A)(i) On or after July 1, 2021:

9 (I) the individual becomes a full-time resident of this State;

10 (II) the individual becomes a full-time employee at a Vermont  
11 location of a for-profit or nonprofit business organization domiciled or  
12 authorized to do business in this State, or of a State, municipal, or other public  
13 sector employer;

14 (III) the individual becomes employed in one of the  
15 “Occupations with the Most Openings” identified by the Vermont Department  
16 of Labor in its “Short Term Employment Projections 2020–2022” or is a dental  
17 hygienist duly licensed and in good standing in a jurisdiction of the United  
18 States or Canada with requirements of education and examination that are  
19 substantially equivalent to those currently in effect in Vermont as determined  
20 by the Director of the Office of Professional Responsibility; and

1 (IV) the employer attests to the Agency that, after reasonable  
2 time and effort, the employer was unable to fill the employee's position from  
3 among Vermont applicants; or

4 (ii) on or after February 1, 2022:

5 (I) the individual becomes a full-time resident of this State; and

6 (II) the individual is a full-time employee of an out-of-state  
7 business and performs the majority of his or her employment duties remotely  
8 from a home office or a co-working space located in this State.

9 (B) The individual receives gross salary or wages that equal or  
10 exceed the Vermont livable wage rate calculated pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 526.

11 (C) The individual is subject to Vermont income tax.

12 \* \* \* Tuition Assistance and Loan Repayment Assistance \* \* \*

13 Sec. 2. TUITION ASSISTANCE FOR PROSPECTIVE DENTAL

14 HYGIENISTS AND DENTAL ASSISTANTS

15 (a)(1) In fiscal year 2023, there is established a need-based tuition  
16 assistance program for individuals pursuing a degree to become either a dental  
17 hygienist or a certificate-level dental assistant. The tuition assistance program  
18 shall provide financial assistance up to the full cost of tuition for an eligible  
19 individual.

1           (2) An eligible individual shall:

2                   (A) attend an accredited Vermont institution of secondary or higher  
3 education, including an online program, at least part-time;

4                   (B) be pursuing a degree to become a dental hygienist or certificate-  
5 level dental assistant; and

6                   (C) commit to employment in a Vermont-based dental practice on a  
7 three-year contractual obligation to provide dental or oral health care treatment  
8 services.

9           (b)(1) The Department for Health shall adopt policies, procedures, and  
10 guidelines necessary for implementation of the program described in  
11 subsection (a) of this section.

12           (2) The Department may contract for the administration of the program.  
13 Administration costs shall not be more than 10 percent of the total  
14 appropriation received to implement this section.

15           (c)(1) Tuition assistance distributed pursuant to this section shall be  
16 available on a first-come, first-served basis until any appropriated funds are  
17 depleted.

18           (2) An eligible individual who does not work the required number of  
19 years in a Vermont-based dental practice after completion of the individual's  
20 degree program shall repay tuition assistance monies received under this

1 section commensurate with the balance of the eligible individual's time  
2 commitment.

3 Sec. 3. LOAN REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE FOR DENTAL HYGIENISTS  
4 AND DENTAL ASSISTANTS

5 (a)(1) In fiscal year 2023, there is established a need-based student loan  
6 repayment assistance program for the purpose of providing student loan  
7 repayment assistance to an individual employed by a Vermont-based dental  
8 practice to provide dental or oral health care treatment services.

9 (2) An eligible individual shall:

10 (A) work in a Vermont-based dental practice to provide dental or oral  
11 health care treatment services for at least an average of 30 hours per week for  
12 48 weeks of the year;

13 (B) receive an annual salary of not more than \$50,000.00; and

14 (C) have earned a degree to become a dental hygienist or certificate-  
15 level dental assistant within the preceding five years and be licensed or  
16 registered, respectively, pursuant to 26 V.S.A. chapter 12.

17 (3) To participate in the program set forth in this section, an eligible  
18 individual shall submit to the Department of Health documentation expressing  
19 the individual's intent to work in a Vermont-based dental practice to provide  
20 dental or oral health care treatment services for at least the 12 months  
21 following the loan repayment award notification. A participant may receive up

1 to \$4,000.00 annually in student loan repayment assistance, which shall be  
2 distributed by the Department in four allotments. The Department shall  
3 distribute at least one-quarter of the individual's total annual benefit after the  
4 individual has completed three months of employment in accordance with the  
5 program. The remainder of an individual's total annual benefit shall be  
6 distributed by the Department every three months after the initial payment.

7 (b)(1) The Department shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines  
8 necessary to implement the provisions of this section.

9 (2) Student loan repayments shall be available pursuant to this section  
10 on a first-come, first-served basis until appropriated funds are depleted.

11 (3) The Department may contract for the administration of the program.  
12 Administration costs shall not be more than 10 percent of the total  
13 appropriation received to implement this section.

14 Sec. 4. REPORT; DENTAL WORKFORCE PROGRAMS

15 On or before March 1, 2023, the Commissioner of Health shall submit a  
16 report to the House Committees on Appropriations and on Health Care and to  
17 the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare:

18 (1) evaluating the effectiveness of the tuition assistance and student loan  
19 repayment assistance programs established in Secs. 2 and 3 of this act at  
20 recruiting and retaining dental hygienists and certificate-level dental assistants;  
21 and

1           (2) identifying funding sources from existing State budget allocations or  
2           new revenue sources to provide a State match in future fiscal years for tuition  
3           assistance and loan repayment assistance for Vermont's dental hygiene and  
4           dental assistant workforce.

5           Sec. 5. APPROPRIATION

6           In fiscal year 2023, \$500,000.00 is appropriated to the Department of  
7           Health from the General Fund for the purpose of funding the tuition assistance  
8           and loan repayment assistance programs for dental hygienists and certificate-  
9           level dental assistants as described in Secs. 2 and 3 of this act.

10                                   \* \* \* Effective Date \* \* \*

11           Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE

12           This act shall take effect on July 1, 2022.