
HOUSE BILL 2002

State of Washington

66th Legislature

2019 Regular Session

By Representative Ortiz-Self

1 AN ACT Relating to creating the social work professional loan
2 repayment program; and adding a new chapter to Title 28B RCW.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** It is the intent of the legislature to
5 incentivize social workers to enter into and continue in state
6 service. Annual turnover is over twenty percent statewide for child
7 welfare workers and over thirty percent in some regions. Repeated
8 turnover has direct costs and indirect costs such as low morale,
9 increased workloads, and the impact of relative inexperience on
10 outcomes of safety, permanence and well-being. Consistent social
11 worker assistance to families creates better outcomes and increases
12 family reunification. The cost of achieving their professional
13 credential requirements can result in a social worker having an
14 educational debt burden greater than their annual salary. Over eighty
15 percent of social workers have student debt and the pressure to pay
16 this debt while caring for at-risk children in crisis can be a major
17 barrier to retaining social workers. In addition, educational debt
18 has been identified as a deterrent to students entering into public
19 service careers.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** Unless the context clearly requires
2 otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout this
3 chapter.

4 (1) "Eligible expenses" means reasonable expenses associated with
5 the costs of acquiring an education such as tuition, books,
6 equipment, fees, room and board, and other expenses determined by the
7 office.

8 (2) "Forgiven," "to forgive," or "forgiveness" means to render
9 social work services as a state of Washington employee.

10 (3) "Loan repayment" means a loan that is paid in full or in part
11 if the participant renders social work services on behalf of the
12 state of Washington.

13 (4) "Office" means the office of student financial assistance.

14 (5) "Participant" means a credentialed social work professional
15 who has received a loan repayment award and commenced practice as a
16 credentialed social worker.

17 (6) "Program" means the social work professional loan repayment
18 program.

19 (7) "Required service obligation" means an obligation by the
20 participant to provide social work services on behalf of the state of
21 Washington department of social and health services children's
22 administration or the state of Washington department of children,
23 youth, and families for a period to be established as provided for in
24 this chapter.

25 (8) "Satisfied" means paid in full.

26 (9) "Social worker" means a person who meets one of the following
27 qualifications:

28 (a) Is licensed under RCW 18.225.090(1)(a); or

29 (b) Has graduated with at least a bachelor's degree from a social
30 work educational program accredited by the council on social work
31 education.

32 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The social work professional loan
33 repayment program is established for credentialed social work
34 professionals. The program shall be administered by the office. In
35 administering this program, the office shall:

36 (1) Verify credentialed social work professionals who are
37 eligible to participate in the program;

38 (2) Adopt rules and develop guidelines to administer the program;

1 (3) Coordinate with the office of financial management state
2 human resources division and the student achievement council to
3 publicize the program, particularly to maximize participation among
4 individuals in shortage areas and among populations expected to
5 experience the greatest growth in the workforce; and

6 (4) Accept grants and donations from public and private sources
7 for the program.

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) Social workers employed by the
9 department of social and health services children's administration or
10 department of children, youth, and families are eligible to
11 participate in the program two years after commencing their
12 employment as a social worker for either agency.

13 (2) Each participant is eligible for:

14 (a) Quarterly or more frequent payments, as determined by the
15 office, subject to the best use of the funds and continued
16 eligibility for the program; and

17 (b) A maximum lifetime award of fifty thousand dollars, for up to
18 a maximum of ten consecutive years, until the loan is repaid.

19 (3) Repayment of loans under this program shall begin no later
20 than ninety days after the individual has become a participant.
21 Payments shall be made quarterly, or more frequently if deemed
22 appropriate by the office, to the participant until:

23 (a) The loan is repaid;

24 (b) The participant becomes ineligible due to discontinued
25 service as a social worker on behalf of the department of social and
26 health services children's administration or department of children,
27 youth, and families; or

28 (c) The award limits specified in subsection (2) of this section
29 are reached.

30 (4) The payments in subsection (3) of this section will be for
31 the full amount of the loans paid by the participant during the prior
32 period.

33 (5) Should the participant discontinue service in a social work
34 profession, payments against the participant's loans shall cease to
35 be effective on the date the participant discontinues service.

36 (6) The office shall not be held responsible for any outstanding
37 payments on principal or interest to any lenders once a participant's
38 eligibility expires.

1 (7) Loans from federal government sources may be repaid by the
2 program.

3 (8) Participants shall allow the office access to loan records
4 and to acquire information from lenders necessary to verify
5 eligibility and to determine payments.

6 (9) Loans may not be renegotiated with lenders to accelerate
7 repayment.

8 (10) The office shall establish an appeal process by rule.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** The office may grant loan repayment to
10 eligible participants from the funds appropriated for this purpose or
11 from any private or public funds given to the office for this
12 purpose. Funds appropriated for the program, including reasonable
13 administrative costs, may be used by the office for the purposes of
14 loan repayments.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** The social work professional loan
16 repayment program fund is created in custody of the state treasurer.
17 Any funds appropriated by the legislature for the social work
18 professional loan repayment program or any other public or private
19 funds intended for loan repayments under this program shall be placed
20 in the program fund created by this section. All receipts from the
21 program shall be deposited into the program fund. Only the office, or
22 its designee, may authorize expenditures from the program fund. The
23 program fund is subject to allotment procedures under chapter 43.88
24 RCW, but no appropriation is required for expenditures.

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** Sections 1 through 6 of this act
26 constitute a new chapter in Title 28B RCW.

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