AN ACT Relating to juvenile rheumatologists; reenacting and amending RCW 28B.115.070; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. The legislature finds that arthritis is a chronic health problem, is the nation's leading cause of physical disability among Americans, and is most common among people with multiple chronic conditions. The legislature also finds that children can develop juvenile arthritis, even as early as one year old or younger. An estimated three hundred thousand children under the age of eighteen have a form of juvenile arthritis or a rheumatic condition. In Washington, there are an estimated six thousand one hundred children who live with juvenile arthritis. These children experience pain, stiffness, and swelling of the joints that can lead to decreased function and mobility. As a result, these children are at a higher risk of depression as well as increased difficulties with learning, peer relationships, and leisure activities. The legislature also finds that there are limited physicians specialized in pediatric and juvenile rheumatology, with only two specialists currently practicing in the state. Therefore, the legislature intends to incentivize more physicians to specialize in pediatric or juvenile rheumatology or to work in Washington by including pediatric and
juvenile rheumatologists for consideration in the health professional loan repayment and scholarship program.

Sec. 2. RCW 28B.115.070 and 2019 c 415 s 954, 2019 c 406 s 72, and 2019 c 302 s 6 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

(1) After June 1, 1992, the department, in consultation with the office and the department of social and health services, shall:

(a) Determine eligible credentialed health care professions for the purposes of the health professional loan repayment and scholarship program and the behavioral health loan repayment program authorized by this chapter. Eligibility shall be based upon an assessment that determines that there is a shortage or insufficient availability of a credentialed profession so as to jeopardize patient care and pose a threat to the public health and safety. The department shall consider the relative degree of shortages among professions when determining eligibility. The department may add or remove professions from eligibility based upon the determination that a profession is no longer in shortage. Should a profession no longer be eligible, participants or eligible students who have received scholarships shall be eligible to continue to receive scholarships or loan repayments until they are no longer eligible or until their service obligation has been completed;

(b) Determine health professional shortage areas for each of the eligible credentialed health care professions; and

(c) Determine underserved behavioral health areas for each of the eligible credentialed health care professions.

(2) For the 2017-2019 and 2019-2021 fiscal biennia, consideration for eligibility shall also be given to registered nursing students who have been accepted into an eligible nursing education program and have declared an intention to teach nursing upon completion of the nursing education program.

(3) For the 2019-2021 fiscal biennium, eligibility for loan repayment shall also be given to chiropractors.

(4) Beginning with the 2020 award cycle, the department must consider pediatric and juvenile rheumatologists for eligibility for loan repayment.

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