

RCW 28B.77.009 Student loan advocate—Public service loan forgiveness program awareness materials. (1) The student loan advocate, established in RCW 28B.77.007, shall develop, and update annually as necessary, materials designed to increase awareness of the public service loan forgiveness program. Materials include, at a minimum:

(a) A standardized letter for public service employers to send to their employees briefly summarizing the public service loan forgiveness program, information about what eligible employees are required to do in order to benefit from the program, and how an eligible employee may contact their student loan servicer for additional resources;

(b) A detailed fact sheet describing the public service loan forgiveness program, including the official website address maintained by the United States department of education for the program and contact information for the student loan advocate; and

(c) A document containing frequently asked questions about the public service loan forgiveness program.

(2) The student loan advocate shall coordinate with the office of financial management, the secretary of state, local governmental entities, and other relevant agencies and public service employer entities to ensure that public service employers receive materials developed in subsection (1) of this section.

(3) For purposes of this section, the definitions in this subsection apply:

(a) "Public service employer" includes the following:

(i) Any governmental entity including state, county, city, or other local government entity including political subdivisions, such as office, department, independent agency, school district, public college or university system, public library system, authority, or other body including the legislature and the judiciary;

(ii) Any employer that has received designation as a tax-exempt organization pursuant to Title 26 U.S.C. Sec. 501(c)(3) of the federal internal revenue code of 1986, as amended;

(iii) Any other entities identified as a public service job in Title 20 U.S.C. Sec. 1087e(m).

(b) "Public service loan forgiveness program" means the federal loan forgiveness program established pursuant to Title 20 U.S.C. Sec. 1087e(m) and 34 C.F.R. Sec. 685.219. [2022 c 248 s 2.]

Intent—2022 c 248: "(1) The legislature recognizes that our country faces a student loan debt crisis. Nationally, Americans owe \$1.73 trillion in student loans. In Washington state, about 767,300 student loan borrowers owe nearly \$27.4 billion of outstanding debt, more than \$35,700 per borrower on average.

(2) Student loan debt is a multigenerational issue that affects borrowers of all ages and jeopardizes millions of families' long-term financial security. While student loan balances have risen for all age groups, older borrowers have seen the largest increase. Student loan defaults rise with the borrower's age, and parents and grandparents take on debt to help their children and grandchildren pay for their education. Borrowers are increasingly defaulting on their debts, resulting in income garnishment and deductions from federal tax refunds or social security payments.

(3) The legislature further recognizes that the federal government offers and provides loan forgiveness for individuals who

have worked in a public service job full time and have made qualifying payments towards their student loans. Unfortunately, the eligibility criteria to qualify for this program has been complex, leading to low approval rates for individuals who would otherwise qualify. By providing more public awareness of this program, the legislature intends to help alleviate the student loan debt burden of those who have committed their lives to public service.

(4) It is the intent of the legislature to do the following:

(a) Develop materials to increase awareness of the federal public service loan forgiveness program;

(b) Create a program for state agencies to certify employment for the purpose of the public service loan forgiveness program;

(c) Have public service employers collaborate on a statewide initiative to improve access and remove barriers to the public service loan forgiveness program for all public service employees in the state; and

(d) Acknowledge the work done outside the classroom by part-time academic employees, allowing for those hours to be counted towards the definition of full time for the public service loan forgiveness program as set forth in 34 C.F.R. Sec. 685.219." [2022 c 248 s 1.]

Effective date—2022 c 248: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately [March 30, 2022]." [2022 c 248 s 6.]