S-1252.1

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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5010**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2015 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Health Care (originally sponsored by Senators Frockt, Rolfes, Kohl-Welles, Hasegawa, Jayapal, Keiser, and Ranker)

AN ACT Relating to the health professional loan repayment and scholarship program fund; adding new sections to chapter 28B.115 RCW; and making appropriations.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28B.115 RCW to read as follows:

The legislature finds that improved access to comprehensive health care services is vital to achieve health equity and an increased quality of healthy life for the people of Washington. Many underserved communities facing financial barriers, including those related to providers' health education loan debt and disparate salaries, struggle to attract and retain well-trained health professionals. Health professional shortage areas also face additional health care delivery challenges, including patient income or transportation barriers and lower provider service reimbursements.

The health professional loan repayment and scholarship program fund assists underserved communities in recruiting and retaining qualified health professionals. The incentive program also encourages interested and academically prepared health care students and professionals to consider practice in shortage areas. The legislature finds that interested students who are encouraged to explore the benefits and unique professional challenges presented in rural health practice are more likely to establish community roots and remain in the area in which they are trained. Providing underserved communities additional resources to recruit qualified health professionals reinforces the state's commitment to improve access to comprehensive health care for all persons in Washington.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28B.115 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this section unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

(a) "EDD participant" means a doctor in nursing education who has received a loan repayment award and has commenced practice teaching nursing or an eligible nurse who has received a scholarship under this EDD program.

(b) "EDD program" means the nursing educator loan repayment and scholarship program.

(c) "Eligible nurse" means a registered nurse student who has been accepted into an eligible nursing education program and has declared an intention to teach nursing upon completion of the nursing education program.

(d) "Eligible nursing education programs" means education programs approved by the department that lead to a doctoral degree in nursing education.

(e) "Teaching service obligation" means an obligation by the EDD participant to teach nursing in Washington state for a period to be established as provided for in this section.

(2) The nurse educator loan repayment and scholarship program is established. The EDD program shall be administered by the office. In administering this program, the office shall:

(a) Select eligible nurses to participate in the loan repayment portion of the EDD program;

(b) Adopt rules and develop guidelines to administer the EDD program;

(c) Collect and manage repayments from EDD participants who do not meet their service obligations under this section;

(d) Publicize the EDD program; and

(e) Solicit and accept grants and donations from public and private sources for the EDD program.

(3) The office, in consultation with the department and the department of social and health services, shall:

(a) Establish the annual award amount for each eligible nurse which must be based upon an assessment of reasonable annual eligible expenses involved in education for each eligible nurse. The annual award amount may be established at a level less than annual eligible expenses. The awards may not be paid for more than a maximum of four years per individual;

(b) Determine any scholarship awards for eligible nurses in an eligible nursing education program, in such a manner to require the recipients to declare an interest in teaching nursing in the state of Washington.

(c) Establish the teaching service obligation for eligible nurses, which may be no less than three years or no more than five years. The teaching service obligation may be based upon the amount of the scholarship or loan repayment award such that higher awards involve longer service obligations; and

(d) Determine eligible nursing education programs.

(4) The office may grant loan repayment and scholarship awards to eligible nurses from the funds appropriated to the health professional loan repayment and scholarship program fund, or from any private or public funds given to the office for this purpose. Nurse participants are ineligible to receive loan repayment if they have received a scholarship from programs authorized under this chapter or chapter 70.180 RCW or are ineligible to receive a scholarship if they have received loan repayment authorized under this chapter or chapter 28B.115 RCW.

(5) The office shall annually establish the total amount of funding to be awarded for loan repayments and scholarships and the allocations must be established based upon the best utilization of funding for that year.

(6) Nurse participants shall agree to meet the required service obligation.

(7) Loans from both government and private sources may be repaid by the EDD program. Nurse participants shall agree to allow the office access to loan records and to acquire information from lenders necessary to verify eligibility and to determine payments.

(8) Repayment of loans established pursuant to this EDD program must begin no later than ninety days after the individual has become a participant.

(9) Except for circumstances beyond their control, nurse participants who serve less than the required teaching obligation are obligated to repay to the EDD program an amount equal to twice the total amount paid by the EDD program on their behalf. The maximum period for repayment is ten years.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The sum of four million dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated from the general fund for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016, for the purposes of restoring funding to the health professional loan repayment and scholarship program fund.

(2) The sum of four million dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated from the general fund for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, for the purposes of restoring funding to the health professional loan repayment and scholarship program fund.

(3) The amounts appropriated in this section shall be deposited into the health professional loan repayment and scholarship program fund.

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