AN ACT Relating to establishing a nurse educator loan repayment program under the Washington health corps; and amending RCW 28B.115.020, 28B.115.030, 28B.115.050, 28B.115.070, 28B.115.080, 28B.115.090, 28B.115.110, and 28B.115.130.

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

Sec. 1. RCW 28B.115.020 and 2019 c 302 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter.

(1) "Approved nursing program" means a nursing educational program that leads to a degree or licensure in nursing that is approved by the nursing care quality assurance commission under RCW 18.79.070 and is located at an institution of higher education that is authorized to participate in state financial aid programs under chapter 28B.92 RCW.

(2) "Credentialed health care profession" means a health care profession regulated by a disciplining authority in the state of Washington under RCW 18.130.040 or by the pharmacy quality assurance commission under chapter 18.64 RCW and designated by the department in RCW 28B.115.070 as a profession having shortages of credentialed health care professionals in the state.
"Credentialed health care professional" means a person regulated by a disciplining authority in the state of Washington to practice a health care profession under RCW 18.130.040 or by the pharmacy quality assurance commission under chapter 18.64 RCW.

"Department" means the state department of health.

"Eligible education and training programs" means education and training programs approved by the department that lead to eligibility for a credential as a credentialed health care professional.

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

"Eligible student" means a student who has been accepted into an eligible education or training program and has a declared intention to serve in a health professional shortage area upon completion of the education or training program.

"Forgiven" or "to forgive" or "forgiveness" means to render health care services in a health professional shortage area, an underserved behavioral health area, or as a nurse educator in the state of Washington in lieu of monetary repayment.

"Health professional shortage areas" means those areas where credentialed health care professionals are in short supply as a result of geographic maldistribution or as the result of a short supply of credentialed health care professionals in specialty health care areas and where vacancies exist in serious numbers that jeopardize patient care and pose a threat to the public health and safety. The department shall determine health professional shortage areas as provided for in RCW 28B.115.070. In making health professional shortage area designations in the state the department may be guided by applicable federal standards for "health manpower shortage areas," and "medically underserved areas," and "medically underserved populations."

"Loan repayment" means a loan that is paid in full or in part if the participant:

(a) Renders health care services in a health professional shortage area or an underserved behavioral health area as defined by the department; or

(b) Teaches as a nurse educator for an approved nursing program.
"Nonshortage rural area" means a nonurban area of the state of Washington that has not been designated as a rural physician shortage area. The department shall identify the nonshortage rural areas of the state.

"Nurse educator" means an individual with an advanced nursing degree beyond a bachelor's degree that teaches nursing curriculum and is a faculty member for an approved nursing program.

"Office" means the office of student financial assistance.

"Participant" means:

(a) A credentialed health care professional who has received a loan repayment award and has commenced practice as a credentialed health care provider in a designated health professional shortage area or an underserved behavioral health area;

(b) A nurse educator teaching in an approved nursing program; or

(c) An eligible student who has received a scholarship under this program.

"Required service obligation" means an obligation by the participant to:

(a) Provide health care services in a health professional shortage area or an underserved behavioral health area for a period to be established as provided for in this chapter; or

(b) Teach as a nurse educator for a period to be established as provided for in this chapter.

"Rural physician shortage area" means rural geographic areas where primary care physicians are in short supply as a result of geographic maldistributions and where their limited numbers jeopardize patient care and pose a threat to public health and safety. The department shall designate rural physician shortage areas.

"Satisfied" means paid-in-full.

"Scholarship" means a loan that is forgiven in whole or in part if the recipient renders health care services in a health professional shortage area or an underserved behavioral health area.

"Sponsoring community" means a rural hospital or hospitals as authorized in chapter 70.41 RCW, a rural health care facility or facilities as authorized in chapter 70.175 RCW, or a city or county government or governments.
"Underserved behavioral health area" means a geographic area, population, or facility that has a shortage of health care professionals providing behavioral health services, as determined by the department.

Sec. 2. RCW 28B.115.030 and 2019 c 302 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

The Washington health corps is the state's initiative to encourage health care professionals to work in underserved communities. In exchange for service, the health care professional receives assistance with higher education, in the form of loan repayment or a conditional scholarship. The Washington health corps consists of the health professional loan repayment and scholarship program, the behavioral health loan repayment program, and the nurse educator loan repayment program.

(1) The health professional loan repayment and scholarship program is established for credentialed health professionals and residents serving in health professional shortage areas.

(2) The behavioral health loan repayment program is established for credentialed health professionals serving in underserved behavioral health areas.

(3) The nurse educator loan repayment program is established for nurse educators teaching for approved nursing programs.

(4) The health professional loan repayment and scholarship and the behavioral health loan repayment programs shall be administered by the office. In administering the programs, the office shall:

(a)(i) Select credentialed health care professionals and residents to participate in the loan repayment portion and in the scholarship portion of the health professional loan repayment and scholarship program; (and)

(ii) Select credentialed health care participants to participate in the behavioral health loan repayment program; and

(iii) Select nurse educators to participate in the nurse educator loan repayment program;

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

(c) Collect and manage repayments from participants who do not meet their service obligations under this chapter;
(d) Publicize the program, particularly to maximize participation among individuals in shortage and underserved areas and among populations expected to experience the greatest growth in the workforce;

(e) Solicit and accept grants and donations from public and private sources for the programs;

(f) Use a competitive procurement to contract with a fund-raiser to solicit and accept grants and donations from private sources for the programs. The fund-raiser shall be paid on a contingency fee basis on a sliding scale but must not exceed fifteen percent of the total amount raised for the programs each year. The fund-raiser shall not be a registered state lobbyist; and

(g) Develop criteria for a contract for service in lieu of the service obligation where appropriate, that may be a combination of service and payment.

Sec. 3. RCW 28B.115.050 and 2019 c 302 s 5 are each amended to read as follows:

The office shall establish a planning committee to assist it in developing criteria for the selection of participants for (both the health professional loan repayment and scholarship program and the behavioral health loan repayment program) the Washington health corps program. The office shall include on the planning committee representatives of the department, the department of social and health services, appropriate representatives from health care facilities, provider groups, consumers, the state board for community and technical colleges, the superintendent of public instruction, institutions of higher education, representatives from the behavioral health and public health fields, and other appropriate public and private agencies and organizations. The criteria may require that some of the participants meet the definition of ("needy student") financial need under RCW 28B.92.030.

Sec. 4. RCW 28B.115.070 and 2021 c 334 s 962 are each 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, 2019-2021, and 2021-2023 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 and 2021-2023 fiscal biennia, eligibility
for loan repayment shall also be given to chiropractors.

(4) During the 2019-2021 and 2021-2023 fiscal biennia, the
department must consider pediatric and juvenile rheumatologists for
eligibility for loan repayment.)} The office, in consultation with
the department, shall determine selection criteria for nurse
educators and approved nursing programs.

Sec. 5. RCW 28B.115.080 and 2019 c 302 s 7 are each amended to
read as follows:

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

(1) Establish the annual award amount for each credentialed
health care profession which shall be based upon an assessment of
reasonable annual eligible expenses involved in training and
education for each credentialed health care profession for both the
health professional loan repayment and scholarship program and the
behavioral health loan repayment program. The annual award amount may
be established at a level less than annual eligible expenses. The
annual award amount shall be established by the office for each
eligible health profession. The awards shall not be paid for more
than a maximum of five years per individual;

(2) Determine any scholarship awards for prospective physicians
in such a manner to require the recipients declare an interest in
serving in rural areas of the state of Washington. Preference for
scholarships shall be given to students who reside in a rural
physician shortage area or a nonshortage rural area of the state
prior to admission to the eligible education and training program in
medicine. Highest preference shall be given to students seeking
admission who are recommended by sponsoring communities and who
declare the intent of serving as a physician in a rural area. The
office may require the sponsoring community located in a nonshortage
rural area to financially contribute to the eligible expenses of a
medical student if the student will serve in the nonshortage rural
area;

(3) Establish the required service obligation for each
credentialed health care profession, which shall be no less than
three years or no more than five years, for the health professional
loan repayment and scholarship program and the behavioral health loan
repayment program. The required service obligation may be based upon
the amount of the scholarship or loan repayment award such that
higher awards involve longer service obligations on behalf of the
participant;

(4) Establish the annual award amount and the required service
obligation for nurse educators participating in the nurse educator
loan repayment program. The annual award amount shall be based upon
an assessment of reasonable annual eligible expenses involved in
training and education. The awards shall not be paid for more than a
maximum of five years per individual. The required service obligation
shall be no less than three years or no more than five years. The
required service obligation may be based upon the amount of the loan
repayment award such that higher awards involve longer service
obligations on behalf of the participant;

(5) Determine eligible education and training programs for
purposes of the scholarship portion of the health professional loan
repayment and scholarship program;

((5)) (6) Honor loan repayment and scholarship contract terms
negotiated between the office and participants prior to May 21, 1991,
concerning loan repayment and scholarship award amounts and service
obligations authorized under this chapter ((28B.115)) or chapter 70.180 RCW.

Sec. 6. RCW 28B.115.090 and 2019 c 302 s 8 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The office may grant loan repayment and scholarship awards to eligible participants from the funds appropriated to the ((health professional loan repayment and scholarship program, or from any private or public funds given to the office for this purpose. The office may grant loan repayment to eligible participants from the funds appropriated to the behavioral health loan repayment program or from any private or public funds given to the office for this purpose)) Washington health corps program. Participants are ineligible to receive loan repayment under the ((health professional loan repayment and scholarship program or the behavioral health loan repayment program)) Washington health corps program 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)).

(2) Funds appropriated for the health professional loan repayment and scholarship program, including reasonable administrative costs, may be used by the office for the purposes of loan repayments or scholarships. The office shall annually establish the total amount of funding to be awarded for loan repayments and scholarships and such allocations shall be established based upon the best utilization of funding for that year.

(3) One portion of the funding appropriated for the health professional loan repayment and scholarship program shall be used by the office as a recruitment incentive for communities participating in the community-based recruitment and retention program as authorized by chapter 70.185 RCW; one portion of the funding shall be used by the office as a recruitment incentive for recruitment activities in state-operated institutions, county public health departments and districts, county human service agencies, federal and state contracted community health clinics, and other health care facilities, such as rural hospitals that have been identified by the department, as providing substantial amounts of charity care or publicly subsidized health care; one portion of the funding shall be used by the office for all other awards. The office shall determine
the amount of total funding to be distributed between the three portions.

Sec. 7. RCW 28B.115.110 and 2019 c 302 s 10 are each amended to read as follows:

Participants in the Washington health corps who are awarded loan repayments shall receive payment for the purpose of repaying educational loans secured while attending a program of health professional training which led to a credential as a credentialed health professional in the state of Washington.

(1) Participants shall agree to meet the required service obligation.

(2) Repayment shall be limited to eligible educational and living expenses as determined by the office and shall include principal and interest.

(3) Loans from both government and private sources may be repaid by the program. 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. Loans may not be renegotiated with lenders to accelerate repayment.

(4) Repayment of loans established pursuant to the Washington health corps shall begin no later than ninety days after the individual has become a participant. Payments shall be made quarterly, or more frequently if deemed appropriate by the office, to the participant until the loan is repaid or the participant becomes ineligible due to discontinued service in a health professional shortage area, an underserved behavioral health area, or as a nurse educator at an approved nursing program after the required service obligation when eligibility discontinues, whichever comes first.

(5) Should the participant discontinue service in a health professional shortage area, an underserved behavioral health area, or as a nurse educator at an approved nursing program, payments against the loans of the participants shall cease to be effective on the date that the participant discontinues service.

(6) Except for circumstances beyond their control, participants who serve less than the required service obligation shall be obligated to repay to the program an amount equal to the unsatisfied portion of the service obligation, or the total amount paid by the program on their behalf, whichever is less. This amount is due and
payable immediately. Participants who are unable to pay the full amount due shall enter into a payment arrangement with the office, including an arrangement for payment of interest. The maximum period for repayment is ten years. The office shall determine the applicability of this subsection. The interest rate shall be determined by the office and be established by rule.

(7) The office is responsible for the collection of payments made on behalf of participants from the participants who discontinue service before completion of the required service obligation. The office shall exercise due diligence in such collection, maintaining all necessary records to ensure that the maximum amount of payment made on behalf of the participant is recovered. Collection under this section shall be pursued using the full extent of the law, including wage garnishment if necessary.

(8) The office shall not be held responsible for any outstanding payments on principal and interest to any lenders once a participant's eligibility expires.

(9) The office shall temporarily or, in special circumstances, permanently defer the requirements of this section for eligible students as defined in RCW 28B.10.017.

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

Sec. 8. RCW 28B.115.130 and 2011 1st sp.s. c 11 s 212 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Any funds appropriated by the legislature for the health professional loan repayment and scholarship program and the nurse educator loan repayment program or any other public or private funds intended for loan repayments or scholarships under these programs shall be placed in the account created by this section.

(2) The health professional loan repayment and scholarship program fund is created in custody of the state treasurer. All receipts from the program shall be deposited into the fund. Only the office, or its designee, may authorize expenditures from the fund. The fund is subject to allotment procedures under chapter 43.88 RCW, but no appropriation is required for expenditures.