

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1946

As of February 12, 2024

Title: An act relating to creating the Washington health corps behavioral health scholarship program.

Brief Description: Creating the Washington health corps behavioral health scholarship program.

Sponsors: Representatives Eslick, Leavitt, Ryu, Slatter, Duerr, Ramos, Senn, Reed, Graham, Callan, Timmons, Macri, Paul, Harris, Lekanoff, Riccelli, Pollet and Davis.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/8/24, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/14/24.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the behavioral health scholarship program under the Washington Health Corps.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

Background: Washington Health Corps. The Washington Health Corps was established in 2019 to encourage healthcare professionals to work in critical shortage areas. In exchange for service, healthcare professionals receive assistance with higher education in the form of loan repayment or conditional scholarships. The Washington Health Corps (Corps) is an umbrella program under which four programs exist:

- the Health Professional Loan Repayment and Scholarship Program;
- the Behavioral Health Loan Repayment Program;
- the Nurse Educator Loan Repayment Program; and
- the Forensic Pathologist Loan Repayment Program.

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The programs provide licensed professionals with repayment on all or a portion of participants' outstanding student loans in exchange for service at an eligible site. Eligible sites are health care facilities that provide comprehensive outpatient, ambulatory, and primary health care services.

Behavioral Health Loan Repayment Program. The Behavioral Health Loan Repayment Program is a program under the Corps umbrella for credentialed health professionals serving in underserved behavioral health areas. An underserved behavioral health area is defined as a geographic area, population, or facility that has a shortage of health care professionals providing behavioral health services as determined by the Department of Health.

Summary of Bill: The Behavioral Health Scholarship Program is created under the Corps for credentialed health professionals serving in underserved behavioral health areas. The Office of Student Financial Assistance (office) is responsible for administration of the program. For the behavioral health loan repayment and scholarship programs, the office must:

- select credentialed health care participants;
- determine eligible professions;
- establish award amounts;
- establish the required service obligation;
- determine eligible education and training programs for the scholarship; and
- annually establish the total amount of funding to be awarded for loan repayments and scholarships.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.