Proposed language for an act relating to enhancing workforce and economic development opportunities

Sec. 29e. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; DESIGNATED AND SPECIALIZED SERVICE AGENCIES; WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (a) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of $6,000,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds to the Agency of Human Services to be distributed to the designated and specialized service agencies equitably based on each agency's proportion of full-time-equivalent (FTE) all staff to the total number of FTE all staff across all designated and specialized service agencies statewide. The designated and specialized service agencies shall use these funds for loan repayment and tuition assistance to promote the recruitment and retention of high-quality mental health and substance use disorder treatment professionals available to Vermont residents in need of their services. Each designated and specialized service agency shall make the funds received available to its current and prospective employees on a rolling basis in exchange for a one-year employment obligation at a designated or specialized service agency in this State. The funds may be used for the following purposes: (A) loan repayment for master's-level clinicians, bachelor's-level direct service staff, and nurses; and (B) tuition assistance for individuals pursuing degrees to become master's-level clinicians, bachelor's-level direct service staff, and nurses. (2) Loan repayment and tuition assistance funds shall be available to the current and prospective employees of designated and specialized service agencies in the form of forgivable loans, with the debt forgiven upon the employee's completion of the required service obligation. (c) On or before March 1, 2024, the Agency of Human Services shall make a presentation available to the House Committees on Appropriations, on Health Care, and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare on the use of the funds appropriated in this section.