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Act No. 155 (H.607). Health; health care professionals; primary care; nursing; scholarships

An act relating to increasing the supply of nurses and primary care providers in Vermont

This act amends the requirements for the health care workforce development strategic plan and requires the Director of Health Care Reform to maintain the plan in consultation with an advisory group. The act requires the Director of Health Care Reform to update the healthcare workforce strategic plan and submit a draft to the Green Mountain Care Board by July 1, 2021 for its review and approval and to the legislative committees of jurisdiction by August 15, 2021.

The act directs the Department of Health, in consultation with the Office of Primary Care and Area Health Education Centers Program at the University of Vermont College of Medicine, to establish a primary care physician scholarship program. The scholarships will cover the medical school tuition for up to five third-year and up to five fourth-year medical students who commit to practicing primary care in a rural area of Vermont or in a Vermont federally qualified health center's service area, in a setting or practice not owned by an academic medical center. For each academic year of tuition covered by the scholarship, the recipient will incur an obligation of two years of full-time service or four years of half-time service. The act appropriates \$608,419 in Global Commitment investment funds (of which the State's share is \$277,500) to the Department of Health for the scholarships in fiscal year 2021 and directs the Secretary of Human Services, in consultation with others, to identify funding sources for the State match for future fiscal years and report them to the legislative committees of jurisdiction by March 1, 2021. The act states that the primary care physician scholarship program will be repealed on July 1, 2022.

The act appropriates \$1,035,957 in Global Commitment investment funds (of which the State's share is \$472,500) to the Department of Health in fiscal year 2021 for additional scholarships for nursing students under an existing program administered by Vermont Student Assistance Corporation. First priority for scholarship funds is for students pursuing a practical nursing certificate, second priority is for students pursuing an associate's degree in nursing to become a registered nurse, and third priority is for students pursuing a bachelor of science degree in nursing. The act requires applicants to demonstrate financial need, have at least a 2.5 grade point average, and agree to work as a nurse in Vermont for at

least one year following licensure for each year of scholarship awarded. It gives first preference to students attending an accredited postsecondary educational institution in Vermont. The act requires the Director of Health Care Reform, in consultation with others, to identify the primary causes of Vermont's nursing workforce shortage and propose solutions to address them, with a report due to the legislative committees of jurisdiction by March 1, 2021.

Effective Date: November 1, 2020