Introduced by Senators Hooker, Hardy, Pollina, Ram and Terenzini

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Health; professions and occupations; physicians; primary care; loan repayment

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to establish a loan repayment assistance program for new primary care physicians that would award grants equal to one-half of the recipient’s outstanding medical school debt, paid over five years, in exchange for a minimum 10-year service obligation as a primary care physician in Vermont.

An act relating to loan repayment assistance for primary care physicians

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. 18 V.S.A. § 34 is added to read:

§ 34. PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS; LOAN REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

(a) The Department of Health, in collaboration with the Office of Primary Care and Area Health Education Centers Program at the University of Vermont College of Medicine (AHEC), shall establish a loan repayment assistance program for primary care physicians. The program shall be open to any
individual, regardless of residence, who graduated from an accredited medical school within the previous two years, and to Vermont residents who graduated from an accredited medical school within the previous five years and are already practicing primary care in this State.

(b)(1) The program shall provide grants to eligible physicians in an amount equal to one-half of the recipient’s outstanding medical school debt, to be allocated over a five-year period.

(2) In exchange for the grant award, the recipient shall incur an obligation of 10 years of service as a primary care physician in Vermont. Approved specialties shall be all of the specialties recognized by the National Health Service Corps at the time of the scholarship award, which may include family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics-gynecology, and psychiatry.

(c) A recipient who does not fulfill the commitment to practice primary care in accordance with the terms of the grant award shall forfeit the remainder of the grant award, if any, and shall be liable for repayment of the full amount of grant funds awarded to date, plus interest calculated in accordance with the formula determined by the National Health Service Corps for failure to complete a service obligation under that program.

Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2021.