

H. 881 FINAL * * * PROVIDER INITIATIVE * * *

*** * * Loan Repayment for Health Care Providers**

in Underserved Areas and for Health Care Educators * * *

Sec. 331. 18 V.S.A. § 10a is added to read:

§ 10a. LOAN REPAYMENT FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS AND

HEALTH CARE EDUCATOR FUND

(a) There is hereby established a special fund to be known as the Vermont health care educational loan repayment fund which shall be used for the purpose of ensuring a stable and adequate supply of health care providers and health care educators to meet the health care needs of Vermonters, with a focus on recruiting and retaining providers and health care educators in underserved geographic and specialty areas.

(b) The fund shall be established and held separate and apart from any other funds or moneys of the state and shall be used and administered exclusively for the purpose of this section. The money in the fund shall be invested in the same manner as permitted for investment of funds belonging to the state or held in the treasury. The fund shall consist of the following:

(1) Such sums as may be appropriated or transferred thereto from time to time by the general assembly, the state emergency board, or the joint fiscal committee during such times as the general assembly is not in session.

(2) Interest earned from the investment of fund balances.

(3) Any other money from any other source accepted for the benefit of the fund.

(c) The fund shall be administered by the department of health, which shall make funds available to the University of Vermont College of Medicine area health education centers (AHEC) program for loan repayment awards. The commissioner may require certification of compliance with this section prior to the making of an award.

(d) AHEC shall administer awards in such a way as to comply with the requirements of Section 108(f) of the Internal Revenue Code.

(e) AHEC shall make loan repayment awards in exchange for service commitment by health care providers and health care educators and shall define the service obligation in a contract with the health care provider or health care educator. Payment awards shall be made directly to the educational loan creditor of the health care provider or health care educator.

(f) Loan repayment awards shall only be available for a health care provider or health care educator who:

(1) is a Vermont resident;

(2) serves Vermont;

(3) accepts patients with coverage under Medicaid, Medicare, or other state-funded health care benefit programs, if applicable; and

(4) has outstanding educational debt acquired in the pursuit of an undergraduate or graduate degree from an accredited college or university that exceeds the amount of the loan repayment award.

(g) Additional eligibility and selection criteria will be developed annually by the commissioner in consultation with AHEC and may include local goals for improved service, community needs, or other awarding parameters.

(h) The commissioner may adopt regulations in order to implement the program established in this section.

(i) As used in this section:

(1) “Health care educator” shall mean an individual employed by or contracted by an accredited postsecondary institution in Vermont to teach in a health care profession educational program.

(2) “Health care provider” shall mean an individual licensed, certified, or authorized by law to provide professional health care service in this state to an individual during that individual’s medical or dental care, treatment, or confinement.