

ASSEMBLY, No. 4660

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 221st LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JUNE 25, 2024

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman SHANIQUE SPEIGHT

District 29 (Essex and Hudson)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes Reproductive Health Care Professional Loan Redemption Program; appropriates \$5 million.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT establishing a loan redemption program for reproductive
2 health care professionals, supplementing chapter 71C of Title 18A
3 of the New Jersey Statutes, and making an appropriation.
4

5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*
7

8 1. The Legislature finds and declares:

9 a. The cost of becoming a physician has increased exponentially,
10 with some health care professionals accruing more than \$200,000 in
11 student loans.

12 b. One-third of New Jersey's counties, home to more than a
13 quarter of all New Jersey women, do not have an abortion provider.

14 c. Geographic proximity to reproductive health care services is
15 imperative and a lack of nearby providers remains a key barrier to
16 timely, quality care.

17 d. Since the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson*
18 *Women's Health Organization*, 21 states and counting have banned
19 or severely restricted abortion access, leading New Jersey to become
20 a vital resource for people seeking abortions.

21 e. Abortion providers have experienced an increase in out-of-
22 State patients, many of whom come to New Jersey because abortion
23 is illegal in their home state.

24 f. Establishing a loan redemption program for reproductive health
25 care professionals will reduce the costs associated with becoming a
26 health care professional and increase the number of providers
27 available in the State who care for the increasing number of patients
28 requiring reproductive health care services.
29

30 2. As used in this act:

31 "Abortion" means any medical treatment intended to induce the
32 termination of a pregnancy and services rendered to facilitate the
33 termination which may include follow up care, except for the purpose
34 of producing a live birth. Abortion includes, but is not limited to,
35 aspiration abortion and medication abortion.

36 "Approved site" means a site providing reproductive health care
37 services, which shall be approved by the authority in consultation
38 with the Department of Health. Approved sites may include, but are
39 not limited to, sites operated by a nonprofit organization, hospitals,
40 clinics, physicians' offices, and other facilities providing
41 reproductive health care services. An approved site shall include sites
42 providing abortions.

43 "Aspiration abortion" means a procedure that terminates a
44 pregnancy utilizing manual or electric suction to empty the uterus.

45 "Authority" means the Higher Education Student Assistance
46 Authority.

47 "Eligible reproductive health care professional" means a person
48 who: is licensed, certified, or otherwise authorized to provide health

1 care services pursuant to Title 45 of the Revised Statutes and is
2 providing reproductive health care services in the State.

3 “Executive director” means the executive director of the Higher
4 Education Student Assistance Authority.

5 “Program” means the Reproductive Health Care Professional
6 Loan Redemption Program established pursuant to this act.

7 “Program participant” means an eligible reproductive health care
8 professional who contracts with the authority to engage in the clinical
9 practice of reproductive health care services at an approved site in
10 exchange for the redemption of qualifying student loan amounts.

11 “Qualifying student loan amounts” means the cumulative
12 outstanding balance of State, federal, or commercial student loans at
13 the time an applicant is selected for the program, which an applicant
14 has borrowed to pay for the cost of attendance for undergraduate or
15 graduate education at an institution of higher education. Interest paid
16 or due on qualifying student loan amounts shall be considered
17 eligible for reimbursement under the program.

18 “Reproductive health care services” means and includes medical,
19 surgical, counseling, or referral services relating to the human
20 reproductive system including, but not limited to, services relating to
21 pregnancy, contraception, or abortion.

22 “Total and permanent disability” means a physical or mental
23 disability that is expected to continue indefinitely or result in death
24 and renders a program participant unable to perform the program
25 participant’s contractual obligation, as determined by the executive
26 director or the executive director’s designee.

27

28 3. There is established a Reproductive Health Care Professional
29 Loan Redemption Program within the Higher Education Student
30 Assistance Authority. The program shall provide for the redemption
31 of a portion of the qualifying student loan amounts of a program
32 participant for each period of service at an approved site.

33

34 4. a. To be eligible to participate in the program, an applicant
35 shall:

36 (1) be a resident of the State;

37 (2) be employed as an eligible reproductive health care
38 professional at an approved site; and

39 (3) submit an application in a manner determined by the executive
40 director.

41 b. The executive director, or the executive director’s designee,
42 shall select the program participants from among those applicants
43 who meet the eligibility criteria, subject to available funds. The
44 executive director shall give preference to applicants employed as an
45 eligible reproductive health care professional in a county facing a
46 shortage of reproductive health care professionals.

47 c. The program participant shall enter into a written contract with
48 the authority to participate in the program. The contract shall specify
49 the duration of the program participant’s required service and the

1 total amount of qualifying student loan amounts to be redeemed by
2 the State in return for service.

3 d. The redemption of loans under the program shall amount to 18
4 percent of the program participant's qualifying student loan amounts
5 in return for one full year of service at an approved site, an additional
6 26 percent for a second full year of service, an additional 28 percent
7 for a third full year of service, and an additional 28 percent for a
8 fourth full year of service. Total redemption of qualifying student
9 loan amounts under the program shall not exceed \$200,000.

10 e. The period of service shall commence on or after the date of
11 enactment of this act.

12 f. No amount of qualifying student loan amounts shall be
13 redeemed for services performed for less than a full year.
14

15 5. a. A program participant who has entered into a redemption
16 contract with the authority may nullify that contract by submitting
17 written notification to the authority and assuming full responsibility
18 for repayment of the full amount of the program participant's student
19 loan amounts.

20 b. In the case of a program participant's death or total and
21 permanent disability, the authority shall nullify the service obligation
22 of the program participant.

23 c. The authority may nullify or suspend a program participant's
24 service obligation if continued enforcement of the contract may result
25 in extreme hardship.
26

27 6. A reproductive health care professional who is participating
28 in the federally administered National Health Service Corps Loan
29 Repayment Program, section 338B of the Public Health Service Act
30 (42 U.S.C. s.254 1-1), or any other loan redemption program
31 administered by the authority shall not be eligible to participate
32 simultaneously in the program.
33

34 7. The authority shall adopt rules and regulations pursuant to the
35 "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et
36 seq.) necessary to implement the provisions of this act.
37

38 8. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Higher
39 Education Student Assistance Authority the sum of \$5,000,000 to
40 effectuate the provisions of this act.
41

42 9. This act shall take effect immediately.
43
44

45 STATEMENT
46

47 This bill establishes the Reproductive Health Care Professional
48 Loan Redemption Program in the Higher Education Student
49 Assistance Authority (HESAA). The loan redemption program is to

1 provide for the redemption of a portion of a program participant's
2 State, federal, or commercial student loans in exchange for the
3 program participant's service at a site providing reproductive health
4 care services, as approved by the authority. Under the bill, the sites
5 may include sites operated by a nonprofit organizations, hospitals,
6 clinics, physicians' offices, and other facilities providing
7 reproductive health care services. An approved site under the bill
8 includes sites providing abortion care.

9 To be eligible to participate in the program, an applicant is
10 required to: (1) be a resident of the State; (2) be employed as an
11 eligible reproductive health care professional, defined as a person
12 who is licensed, certified, or otherwise authorized to provide health
13 care services and who is providing reproductive health care services
14 in the State; and (3) submit an application in a manner determined by
15 the executive director of the HESAA.

16 In selecting program participants, the executive director is
17 required to give preference to applicants employed as an eligible
18 reproductive health care professional in a county facing a shortage of
19 reproductive health care professionals. The bill stipulates that a
20 selected program participant is to enter into a written contract with
21 the authority. The contract is to specify the duration of the program
22 participant's required service and the total amount of student loans
23 to be redeemed in return for the service.

24 Under the bill, loan redemption is to amount to 18 percent of a
25 program participant's qualifying loan amounts in return for one full
26 year of service at an approved site, an additional 26 percent for a
27 second full year of service, an additional 28 percent for a third full
28 year of service, and an additional 28 percent for a fourth full year of
29 service. The total loan redemption for a program participant is not to
30 exceed \$200,000.

31 Finally, the bill stipulates that a reproductive health care
32 professional, who is participating in the National Health Services
33 Corps Loan Repayment Program or any other loan redemption
34 program administered by the authority, is not eligible to
35 simultaneously participate in the Reproductive Health Care
36 Professional Loan Redemption Program.