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LRB104 20367 MST 33822 r

1 HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The United States Department of Education has
3 proposed to exclude graduate degrees in nursing, social work,
4 counseling, therapy, education, and allied health professions
5 from the definition of "professional degrees" for federal
6 student loan purposes under regulations implementing the One
7 Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025; and

8 WHEREAS, This proposed federal reclassification would
9 reduce federal student loan limits for students pursuing
10 Master of Social Work (MSW), Doctor of Social Work (DSW),
11 Master of Science in Nursing (MSN), Doctor of Nursing Practice
12 (DNP), master's degrees in counseling and therapy, Doctor of
13 Physical Therapy (DPT), master's and doctoral degrees in
14 occupational therapy, master's degrees in speech-language
15 pathology, Doctor of Audiology (AuD), Master of Physician
16 Assistant Studies, Master of Public Health (MPH), Doctor of
17 Public Health (DrPH), master's degrees in education, and other
18 essential health and human services credentials; and

19 WHEREAS, The proposed reclassification would reduce annual
20 federal student loan limits and lifetime limits for students
21 in these programs; and

22 WHEREAS, This reduction may not cover the full cost of

1 graduate education for many students pursuing careers in
2 health and human services, potentially forcing them to rely on
3 higher-cost private loans or forgo graduate education
4 entirely; and

5 WHEREAS, Illinois is home to tens of thousands of licensed
6 professionals in nursing, social work, counseling, therapy,
7 physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech-language
8 pathology, audiology, public health, physician assistant
9 practice, and education who hold or require these graduate
10 credentials; and

11 WHEREAS, The State of Illinois requires professional
12 licensure for these practitioners, including Licensed Clinical
13 Social Workers (LCSW), Licensed Social Workers (LSW), Advanced
14 Practice Registered Nurses (APRN), Licensed Clinical
15 Professional Counselors (LCPC), Licensed Professional
16 Counselors (LPC), Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists
17 (LMFT), Physical Therapists (PT), Occupational Therapists
18 (OT), Speech-Language Pathologists (SLP), Audiologists,
19 Physician Assistants (PA), and Professional Educator Licenses
20 (PEL); and

21 WHEREAS, These professions require rigorous academic
22 preparation, including advanced graduate education, supervised
23 clinical practice, comprehensive examinations, and ongoing

1 continuing education to maintain licensure; and

2 WHEREAS, Illinois law recognizes these practitioners as
3 professionals under the Illinois Compiled Statutes, including
4 the Clinical Social Work and Social Work Practice Act (225
5 ILCS 20/), the Nurse Practice Act (225 ILCS 65/), the
6 Professional Counselor and Clinical Professional Counselor
7 Licensing and Practice Act (225 ILCS 107/), the Illinois
8 Marriage and Family Therapy Licensing Act (225 ILCS 55/), the
9 Illinois Physical Therapy Act (225 ILCS 90/), the Illinois
10 Occupational Therapy Practice Act (225 ILCS 75/), and other
11 professional licensing statutes; and

12 WHEREAS, These professionals provide essential services to
13 Illinois residents, including mental health counseling,
14 substance abuse treatment, child welfare services, medical
15 social work, acute and primary healthcare, rehabilitation
16 therapy, speech and language services, public health
17 interventions, and educational support; and

18 WHEREAS, The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects
19 approximately 74,000 openings for social workers annually over
20 the next decade nationwide, highlighting critical workforce
21 shortages, with similar shortages documented across
22 counseling, therapy, and allied health professions; and

1 WHEREAS, According to data from the U.S. Department of
2 Health and Human Services and the Health Resources and
3 Services Administration, the United States currently faces a
4 shortage of approximately 295,800 registered nurses as of
5 2025, with projections indicating continued deficits through
6 2037; and

7 WHEREAS, The proposed federal reclassification will
8 disproportionately impact women, who comprise between 75-85%
9 of students and practitioners in these fields, and will create
10 barriers for first-generation college students, low-income
11 students, and students from underrepresented communities who
12 rely on federal student loans to finance graduate education;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, Communities throughout Illinois, particularly
15 rural areas, low-income neighborhoods, and underserved urban
16 communities, depend on these professionals for access to
17 healthcare, mental health services, child welfare, education,
18 and social support; and

19 WHEREAS, The economic contributions of these professions
20 to Illinois are substantial, with licensed professionals in
21 nursing, social work, counseling, therapy, and allied health
22 fields generating billions of dollars in economic activity
23 annually while serving vulnerable populations and preventing

1 more costly interventions; and

2 WHEREAS, The proposed federal reclassification contradicts
3 Illinois' longstanding recognition of these practitioners as
4 licensed professionals who meet rigorous educational,
5 clinical, and ethical standards; and

6 WHEREAS, The State of Illinois has a compelling interest
7 in ensuring adequate access to affordable graduate education
8 for health and human services professionals in order to meet
9 the healthcare, mental health, child welfare, educational, and
10 social service needs of Illinois residents; and

11 WHEREAS, Illinois must take proactive steps to protect its
12 health and human services workforce from federal policies that
13 threaten to reduce access to these essential professions;
14 therefore, be it

15 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
16 HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE
17 SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that we believe that nursing, social
18 work, professional counseling, marriage and family therapy,
19 physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech-language
20 pathology, audiology, physician assistant practice, public
21 health, and education are professional disciplines that
22 require advanced graduate education, professional licensure,

1 and adherence to rigorous ethical and clinical standards; and
2 be it further

3 RESOLVED, That we believe the following graduate degrees
4 are professional degrees requiring advanced professional
5 education and leading to professional licensure:

6 (a) Social Work: Master of Social Work (MSW), Doctor
7 of Social Work (DSW), Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work
8 (PhD);

9 (b) Nursing: Master of Science in Nursing (MSN),
10 Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), Advanced Practice
11 Registered Nurse (APRN) specialty degrees;

12 (c) Counseling and Therapy: master's degrees in
13 Clinical Mental Health Counseling, master's degrees in
14 Counseling Psychology, master's degrees in Rehabilitation
15 Counseling, master's degrees in Marriage and Family
16 Therapy, other counseling degrees leading to Licensed
17 Professional Counselor (LPC), Licensed Clinical
18 Professional Counselor (LCPC), or Licensed Marriage and
19 Family Therapist (LMFT) licensure;

20 (d) Physical Therapy: Doctor of Physical Therapy
21 (DPT);

22 (e) Occupational Therapy: Master of Occupational
23 Therapy (MOT), Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD);

24 (f) Speech-Language Pathology: Master of Science in
25 Speech-Language Pathology (MS-SLP), Master of Arts in

1 Speech-Language Pathology (MA-SLP);
2 (g) Audiology: Doctor of Audiology (AuD);
3 (h) Physician Assistant: Master of Physician Assistant
4 Studies (MPAS), Master of Medical Science - Physician
5 Assistant (MMS-PA);
6 (i) Public Health: Master of Public Health (MPH),
7 Doctor of Public Health (DrPH); and
8 (j) Education: master's degrees in Education, master's
9 degrees in Teaching, master's degrees in School Social
10 Work, master's degrees in School Counseling, master's
11 degrees in Educational Leadership, other graduate
12 education degrees leading to Professional Educator License
13 (PEL) endorsements; and be it further

14 RESOLVED, That any state agency, public university, or
15 entity receiving state funds should take all necessary steps
16 to avoid discrimination against individuals holding these
17 graduate degrees in hiring, promotion, compensation,
18 professional development funding, or other terms and
19 conditions of employment based on any federal student loan
20 classification; and be it further

21 RESOLVED, That we urge the United States Department of
22 Education to include all graduate degrees in nursing, social
23 work, counseling, therapy, physical therapy, occupational
24 therapy, speech-language pathology, audiology, physician

1 assistant practice, public health, and education in its
2 definition of "professional degrees" for federal student loan
3 purposes; and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That we urge the Illinois Congressional
5 Delegation to advocate for legislation to ensure that graduate
6 students in all health and human services professions have
7 access to adequate federal student loan funding to complete
8 their professional education; and be it further

9 RESOLVED, That we commit to exploring state-level
10 solutions to support graduate education in health and human
11 services professions, including but not limited to
12 scholarships, grants, loan repayment assistance programs, and
13 other workforce development initiatives; and be it further

14 RESOLVED, That we express our support for the licensed
15 health and human services professionals in Illinois who serve
16 our most vulnerable populations with skill, compassion, and
17 unwavering commitment to the public good; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
19 delivered to Governor JB Pritzker, the Illinois Board of
20 Higher Education, the Illinois Department of Financial and
21 Professional Regulation, the American Nurses Association -
22 Illinois, the Illinois Nurses Association, the National

1 Association of Social Workers - Illinois Chapter, and the
2 Illinois Federation of Teachers.