

AN ACT concerning education.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the Human Services Professional Loan Repayment Program Act.

Section 5. Purpose. The purpose of the Human Services Professional Loan Repayment Program is to recruit and retain qualified human service professionals to work for community-based human services providers. Due to numerous factors, human services agencies have a high turnover rate and struggle to maintain consistent staffing levels. Many of these positions require degrees in human services-related fields of study. In addition, most human services positions require a graduate degree or postsecondary degree or certification. The higher education requirements for the human services workforce often means that many students graduate with a high level of debt for a job that pays slightly above minimum wage with a great deal of stress and burnout.

Section 10. Definitions. In this Act:

"Commission" means the Illinois Student Assistance Commission.

"Professional" means an individual employed by a human

services agency that contracts with or is grant-funded by a State agency for the purposes of providing direct or indirect services that ensure that individuals have the essential elements to build and maintain physical, emotional, and economic well-being at every phase of life.

"Program" means the Human Services Professional Loan Repayment Program.

"Qualified program" means a program that offers an associate, bachelor's, or master's degree from an accredited college or university.

"State agency" means the Department of Human Services, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department on Aging, and the Department of Public Health.

Section 15. Establishment of the Program. The Human Services Professional Loan Repayment Program is created and shall be administered by the Commission. Subject to appropriation, the Program shall provide loan repayment assistance to eligible professionals practicing in a community-based, human services agency that contracts with or is grant-funded by a State agency.

Section 20. Applications. Each year for which funds have been appropriated, the Commission shall receive and consider applications for loan repayment assistance under this Act. All

applications must be submitted to the Commission in a form and manner prescribed by the Commission. An eligible professional must submit any supporting documents deemed necessary by the Commission at the time of application.

Section 25. Award; maximum loan time; maximum amount. The Commission shall award a grant to each eligible applicant for a cumulative maximum of 4 years. The recipient of a grant awarded by the Commission under this Act must use the grant award for payments toward the recipient's educational loans from a qualified program. The amount of the grant shall not exceed: (i) \$25,000 per year for a master's degree or higher; (ii) \$15,000 per year for a bachelor's degree; (iii) \$3,000 per year for a professional with an associate degree; and (iv) up to a \$5,000 per year add-on if independently licensed as a licensed clinical social worker, a licensed clinical professional counselor, a licensed practitioner of the healing arts, a licensed marriage and family therapist, a board-certified behavior analyst, or a registered behavior technician.

Section 30. Eligibility; work requirement.

(a) To be eligible to receive a grant under the Human Services Professional Loan Repayment Program, the Commission must find that the eligible professional satisfies all of the following:

(1) The applicant is a resident of the State of Illinois.

(2) The applicant has worked for at least 24 consecutive months as a full-time employee as a human services professional in a community-based human services agency that currently has or did have a contract with a State agency to provide human services during the duration of applicant's 24 consecutive month tenure.

(3) The applicant is a borrower with an outstanding balance due on an educational loan.

(4) The applicant has not defaulted on an educational loan.

(5) The applicant must remain a full-time employee as a human services professional in the same community-based human services agency for at least 12 months after receiving this grant.

(b) The Commission may grant preference to a previous recipient of a grant under the Program, provided that the recipient continues to meet the eligibility requirements under this Section.

Section 35. Administration; rules. The Commission shall administer the Program and shall adopt rules not inconsistent with this Act for the Program's effective implementation.

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect January 1, 2023.