

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2024 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 998

FISCAL
NOTE

By Senator Fuller

[Introduced February 19, 2026; referred
to the Committee on Health and Human Resources;
and then to the Committee on Finance]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding a new article,
 2 designated §16-5EE-1, §16-5EE-2, §16-5EE-3, §16-5EE-4, §16-5EE-5, §16-5EE-6, §16-
 3 5EE-7, and §16-5EE-8, relating to recruitment of mental health professionals focusing on
 4 children and adolescents; setting forth purpose; defining terms; setting forth eligibility
 5 criteria; setting required loan repayment documents and procedure; designating the
 6 Department of Health to administer the program; setting forth award requirements and
 7 procedure; creating a fund; requiring record retention; and requiring rulemaking.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 5EE. LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM RECRUITMENT PROGRAM.

§16-5EE-1. Purpose.

1 Mental health professionals who focus their practice on children or adolescents shall
 2 assess, diagnose, and treat behavioral, cognitive, and developmental issues. There is a persistent
 3 shortage of mental health professionals that focus their practice on children or adolescents both
 4 locally and nationally and this problem has only grown worse. The purpose of this article is to
 5 incentivize people to enter the profession by alleviating their student loan burden.

§16-5EE-2. Definitions.

1 For purpose of this article:
 2 "Department" means the Department of Health
 3 "License" or "Licensed" means an applicant who currently has a full and unrestricted
 4 license to practice in West Virginia with a focus on the care and treatment of children or
 5 adolescents in any of the following fields: Doctoral level clinical psychologist, Master's level clinical
 6 psychologist, licensed independent clinical social worker, licensed graduate social worker,
 7 licensed professional counselor, licensed psychiatric or mental health nurse practitioner.

§16-5EE-3. Eligibility for loan repayment program.

1 To be eligible for the loan repayment program the participant shall:
 2 (1) Have a degree from an accredited school;

- 3 (2) Be licensed in West Virginia;
- 4 (3) Be employed as a full-time as a licensed provider as defined in this article;
- 5 (4) Fulfill 12 consecutive months of employment in the state of West Virginia for each year
- 6 of loan repayment award requested and are subject to the following requirements:

7 (A) Employment prior to the start date cannot be used to fulfill the 12 consecutive months
8 employment service requirement;

9 (B) Twelve consecutive months of employment service cannot be used for more than one
10 loan repayment from the Loan Repayment Recruitment Program;

11 (C) No partial year employment service may be considered for loan repayment;

12 (D) The Department of Health shall confirm an applicant’s employment service dates and
13 job position; and

14 (E) Applicants may qualify for up to 10 years of the Loan Repayment Recruitment Program
15 with 10 years of eligible employment service. This eligibility determination shall be conducted on a
16 year-to-year basis and is subject to the other provisions of this article.

17 (5) The applicant shall have an outstanding balance on one or more eligible student loans;

18 (6) The student loan shall be an eligible loan and in the name of the applicant;

19 (7) The student loan shall be in good standing; and

20 (8) The applicant shall continue to make their loan payments as directed by the lender
21 agreements.

§16-5EE-4. Loan repayment documents and procedure to request loan repayment; and
Department of Health to administer program.

1 (a) An applicant seeking loan repayment shall submit the required documentation to the
2 Department of Health by July 1 each year, which documentation shall include at a minimum an
3 application seeking loan repayment, an employer verification, and a lender verification.

2 Repayment Recruitment Program Fund. The fund shall be comprised of moneys appropriated by
 3 the Legislature and moneys deposited into the fund to support the Loan Repayment Recruitment
 4 Program Fund. The funds do not expire to the General Revenue Fund but shall remain in the
 5 account and be available for expenditure in succeeding fiscal years. Expenditures from the Loan
 6 Repayment Recruitment Program Fund shall be for the purposes set forth in this article. If there a
 7 lack of funding, there is no obligation to administer a loan repayment program. The loan
 8 repayment program is limited to funding availability.

§16-5EE-7. Record retention.

1 The Department of Health shall maintain accurate records, books, and other evidence
 2 concerning the Loan Repayment Recruitment Program and its related fund, including but not
 3 limited to individual applicant files for whichever is longer;

- 4 (1) Six years after the award year in which the loan repayment was awarded; or
- 5 (2) For such other period as required by applicable, statute, rule, or regulation.

§16-5EE-8. Rulemaking.

1 The Department of Health shall propose rules for legislative approval in accordance with
 2 §29A-3-1 et seq. of this code to administer this program and which are consistent with this article,
 3 including but not limited to setting for a listing of eligible loans.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to create a student loan repayment program for mental health professionals focusing on children and adolescents.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.