

SENATE BILL NO. _____ HOUSE BILL NO. _____

1 A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 2 of Chapter 1 of Title 32.1 an article a section
2 numbered 32.1-15.2, relating to social worker student loan grant program.

3 **Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

4 **1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Article 2 of Chapter 1 of Title 32.1 an article**
5 **a section numbered 32.1-15.2, as follows:**

6 **§ 32.1-15.2. Licensed Social Worker Student Loan Grant Program.**

7 **A. For the purposes of this section:**

8 **"Board" means the Virginia Board of Health.**

9 **"Critical human service area" means an area in the Commonwealth designated by the**
10 **Board, in consultation with the Department of Health, the Department of Behavioral Health and**
11 **Developmental Services, and the Office of Children's Services, provided that such areas shall include,**
12 **but not be limited to, areas with a shortage of social workers in home care, health, mental health,**
13 **substance abuse, aging, HIV/AIDS and child welfare concerns, or communities with multi-lingual needs.**

14 **"Eligible outstanding student loan debt" means debt as a result of (i) student loans issued by federal**
15 **or state governments, or (ii) private student loans made by commercial entities subject to governmental**
16 **examination. Such loans must have been made directly to the social worker for his post-secondary**
17 **education.**

18 **"Eligible social worker" means a social worker who (i) is licensed as required by § 54.1-3706; (ii)**
19 **has been employed full-time as a licensed social worker in a critical human service area for at least 35**
20 **hours per week during the calendar year prior to his application; (iii) has an eligible outstanding student**
21 **loan debt, and (iv) has resided in the Commonwealth for 12 continuous months prior to applying for this**
22 **program and has Virginia taxable income as defined by § 58.1-322.**

23 **B. The Licensed Social Worker Student Loan Grant Program is established for the purpose of**
24 **increasing the number of social workers serving in critical human service areas. The Program will be**

25 administered by the Board. The Board may adopt regulations consistent with this article and appropriate
26 to the administration of the Program.

27 C. Subject to appropriations, the Board shall grant awards in the value of \$6,500 to eligible social
28 workers who have provided full-time social work services in a critical human service area in the year prior
29 to such application. No recipient shall receive an award that exceeds the total remaining balance of the
30 student loan debt and no recipient shall receive cumulative awards, pursuant to this section, in excess of
31 \$26,000. Awards shall be within the amounts appropriated for such purpose and based on availability of
32 funds. A social worker who is in default on a student loan shall be ineligible to receive any grant pursuant
33 to this section until the social worker cures the default status.

34 D. There is hereby created in the state treasury a special nonreverting fund to be known as the
35 Social Worker Student Loan Grant Fund, referred to in this section as "the Fund." The Fund shall be
36 established on the books of the Comptroller. All funds appropriated for such purpose and any gifts,
37 donations, grants, bequests, and other funds received on its behalf shall be paid into the state treasury and
38 credited to the Fund. Interest earned on moneys in the Fund shall remain in the Fund and be credited to it.
39 Any moneys remaining in the Fund, including interest thereon, at the end of each fiscal year shall not
40 revert to the general fund but shall remain in the Fund. Moneys in the Fund shall be used solely for the
41 purposes of awarding grants to eligible social workers pursuant to § 54.1-3709.6. Expenditures and
42 disbursements from the Fund shall be made by the State Treasurer on warrants issued by the Comptroller
43 upon written request signed by the State Health Commissioner.

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