

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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121st MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2003

Legislative Document

No. 715

S.P. 253

In Senate, February 14, 2003

An Act to Assist Visual Care Providers in the State

Reference to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joy J. O'Brien".

JOY J. O'BRIEN
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by Senator STANLEY of Penobscot.
Cosponsored by Representative PARADIS of Frenchville and
Senators: HATCH of Somerset, KNEELAND of Aroostook, Representatives: CARR of
Lincoln, DAVIS of Falmouth, GOODWIN of Pembroke, HATCH of Skowhegan.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

2
4 **Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §12101, sub-§8**, as amended by PL 1995, c. 117, Pt. D, §1 and affected by §3, is further amended to read:

6 **8. Primary health care.** "Primary health care" means
8 general or family practice of medicine, general internal
10 medicine, general pediatrics, general dentistry, ophthalmology,
12 optometry and obstetrics and gynecology.

14 **Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §12104, sub-§5, ¶A**, as amended by PL 1995,
16 c. 117, Pt. D, §2 and affected by §3, is further amended to read:

18 A. Upon completion of professional education the student
20 shall repay the loan in accordance with the following
22 schedule.

24 (1) A loan recipient who does not obtain loan
26 forgiveness pursuant to this section shall repay the
28 entire principal portion of the loan plus simple
30 interest at a rate to be determined by rule of the
32 authority. Interest does not begin to accrue until the
34 loan recipient completes medical education, including
36 residency and internship. The authority may establish
 differing interest rates to encourage loan recipients
 to practice primary health care medicine in the State.

38 (2) Primary health care physicians providers and
40 dentists practicing in a designated health professional
42 shortage area, any physician, ophthalmologist or
44 optometrist practicing in an underserved specialty or
46 any physician, ophthalmologist or optometrist providing
 services to a designated underserved group are is
 forgiven the larger of 25% of the original outstanding
 indebtedness plus any accrued interest or \$7,500 for
 each year of practice.

 Primary health care physicians providers and dentists
 practicing in the State, but not practicing in a
 designated health professional shortage area, are
 forgiven the larger of 12.5% of the original
 outstanding indebtedness plus any accrued interest or
 \$3,750 for each year of practice.

 (3) Veterinarians providing services to Maine
 residents with insufficient veterinary services are
 forgiven the larger of 25% of the original outstanding

2 indebtedness plus any accrued interest or \$7,500 for
each year of practice.

4 (4) Any student completing an entire residency at any
6 primary health care residency program in the State is
8 forgiven 50% of the original outstanding indebtedness
10 for each year of practice in a designated health
12 professional shortage area, as a physician practicing
in an underserved specialty or as a physician providing
services to an underserved group or 25% of the original
outstanding indebtedness for each year of primary
health care practice in the State.

14 SUMMARY

16 This bill expands the loan forgiveness aspect of the Health
18 Professions Loan Program to include ophthalmologists and
optometrists practicing in health professional shortage areas,
20 practicing in underserved specialty areas or providing services
to a designated underserved group as determined by the
22 Commissioner of Human Services. Currently dentists and
physicians practicing general or family medicine, internal
24 medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology qualify for loan
forgiveness under the program.