MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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128th MAINE LEGISLATURE

SECOND REGULAR SESSION-2018

Legislative Document

No. 1879

H.P. 1311

House of Representatives, March 22, 2018

An Act To Enhance and Increase the Availability of Mental Health Providers in Maine

(AFTER DEADLINE)

(EMERGENCY)

Approved for introduction by a majority of the Legislative Council pursuant to Joint Rule 205.

Reference to the Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development suggested and ordered printed.

ROBERT B. HUNT

R(+ B. Hunt

Clerk

Presented by Representative HANDY of Lewiston.

Cosponsored by Senator MILLETT of Cumberland and

Representatives: BEEBE-CENTER of Rockland, COOPER of Yarmouth, FARNSWORTH of

Portland, McCREIGHT of Harpswell, PERRY of Calais, TALBOT ROSS of Portland,

Senator: BELLOWS of Kennebec.

1 2	Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and			
3 4	Whereas, there is an acute shortage of mental health providers in the State and pressing mental health needs that affect the well-being and safety of the populace; and			
5 6	Whereas, mental health providers, like many professionals, incur student debt as have difficulty paying student loans; and			
7 8 9 10	Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore,			
11	Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:			
12	Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA c. 441 is enacted to read:			
13	CHAPTER 441			
14	MAINE MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM			
15	§12941. Definitions			
16 17	As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.			
18	1. Authority. "Authority" means the Finance Authority of Maine.			
19 20	2. Fund. "Fund" means the Maine Mental Health Providers Loan Repayment Fund established in section 12943.			
21 22 23	3. Mental health provider. "Mental health provider" means an individual who possesses, at a minimum, a bachelor's degree from a qualified institution of higher education and who practices in the State as:			
24	A. A licensed social worker;			
25	B. A licensed clinical social worker;			
26	C. A licensed master social worker;			
27	D. A licensed professional counselor, conditional; or			
28	E. A licensed professional counselor.			
29 30	4. Program. "Program" means the Maine Mental Health Providers Loan Repayment Program established in section 12942.			
31 32	5. Qualified institution of higher education. "Qualified institution of higher education" means an accredited institution of higher education eligible to receive federal			

1 2	assistance under a federal student assistance program authorized under the federal Higher Education Act of 1965, Title IV.			
3	§12942. Maine Mental Health Providers Loan Repayment Program			
4 5 6	1. Establishment. The Maine Mental Health Providers Loan Repayment Program is established to increase the number of mental health providers practicing in underserved areas of the State. The authority shall administer the program and the fund.			
7	2. Eligibility. To be eligible to participate in the program, an applicant must:			
8	A. Be a mental health provider;			
9 10	B. Have a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree related to the applicant's practice from a qualified institution of higher education;			
11	C. Possess an outstanding student loan relating to the degree under paragraph B;			
12 13	D. Practice in an underserved practice area as defined in rule, including but not limited to the practice of mental health care or social work:			
14	(1) In a public or private child welfare or family service agency;			
15	(2) In a public or private educational institution, kindergarten to grade 12;			
16	(3) In a public or private hospital;			
17	(4) In a public interest law service;			
18	(5) In a public child care facility;			
19	(6) In a public service for individuals with disabilities;			
20	(7) In a public service for the elderly;			
21	(8) In a public service for veterans; or			
22 23	(9) At an organization exempt from taxation under the United States Internal Revenue Code, Section 501(c)(3);			
24 25 26	E. Submit an application to the authority, which must include but is not limited to information concerning academic performance, awards and special honors and community involvement; and			
27 28 29	F. Sign a statement of intent to work as a mental health provider in an underserved practice area in the State for a minimum of 5 years after acceptance into the program in a form acceptable to the authority.			
30 31 32 33	3. Maximum amount; participants. The authority may annually accept up to 3 participants from the applications submitted in accordance with subsection 2. The maximum amount available to each participant is \$5,000 per year for a period of up to 5 years.			
34	§12943. Maine Mental Health Providers Loan Repayment Fund			
35 36	The Maine Mental Health Providers Loan Repayment Fund is created as a nonlapsing, interest-earning, revolving fund to carry out the purposes of this chapter.			

The authority may receive, invest and expend on behalf of the fund money from gifts, grants, bequests and donations in addition to money appropriated or allocated by the State and any federal funds received by the State for the benefit of mental health providers who have outstanding student loans. Money received by the authority on behalf of the fund must be used for the purposes of this chapter. The fund must be maintained and administered by the authority. Any unexpended balance in the fund carries forward for continued use under this chapter.

Costs and expenses of maintaining, servicing and administering the fund and of administering the program may be paid out of amounts in the fund.

§12944. Rules

The authority may adopt rules to carry out the purposes of this chapter. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules pursuant to Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

Sec. 2. Appropriations and allocations. The following appropriations and allocations are made.

FINANCE AUTHORITY OF MAINE

Maine Mental Health Providers Loan Repayment Fund

Initiative: Provides appropriations for the repayment of student loans for certain mental health providers who practice in underserved practice areas and to pay the administrative costs of the fund.

22	GENERAL FUND	2017-18	2018-19
23	All Other	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
24			
25	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

28 SUMMARY

This bill establishes and provides funding for the Maine Mental Health Providers Loan Repayment Program to be administered by the Finance Authority of Maine. Under the program, mental health providers may have portions of their student loans repaid annually for up to 5 years, as long as the participants meet certain criteria, including agreeing to practice in an underserved practice area for at least 5 years after acceptance into the program.