

115TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

To amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize a loan repayment program for mental health professionals to relieve workforce shortages, and for other purposes.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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Ms. HARRIS introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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**A BILL**

To amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize a loan repayment program for mental health professionals to relieve workforce shortages, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Mental Health Profes-  
5 sionals Workforce Shortage Loan Repayment Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM FOR MENTAL HEALTH**  
7 **PROFESSIONALS IN SHORTAGE.**

8 Title VII of the Public Health Service Act is amend-  
9 ed—

1 (1) by redesignating part F (42 U.S.C. 295j et  
2 seq.) as part G; and

3 (2) by inserting after part E (42 U.S.C. 294n  
4 et seq.) the following:

5 **“PART F—MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN**  
6 **WORKFORCE SHORTAGE**

7 **“SEC. 781. LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM FOR MENTAL**  
8 **HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN WORKFORCE**  
9 **SHORTAGES.**

10 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, acting through  
11 the Administrator of the Health Resources and Services  
12 Administration, shall carry out a program under which—

13 “(1) the Secretary enters into agreements with  
14 individuals to make payments in accordance with  
15 subsection (b) on the principal of and interest on  
16 any eligible loan; and

17 “(2) the individuals each agree to complete a  
18 period of service in a mental health professional  
19 shortage area.

20 “(b) PAYMENTS.—For each year of obligated service  
21 by an individual pursuant to an agreement under sub-  
22 section (a), the Secretary shall make a payment to such  
23 individual as follows:

24 “(1) SERVICE IN A SHORTAGE AREA.—The Sec-  
25 retary shall pay—

1           “(A) for each year of obligated service by  
2           an individual pursuant to an agreement under  
3           subsection (a),  $\frac{1}{6}$  of the principal of and inter-  
4           est on each eligible loan of the individual which  
5           is outstanding on the date the individual began  
6           service pursuant to the agreement; and

7           “(B) for completion of the sixth and final  
8           year of such service, the remainder of such  
9           principal and interest.

10          “(2) MAXIMUM AMOUNT.—The total amount of  
11          payments under this section to any individual shall  
12          not exceed \$250,000.

13          “(c) ELIGIBLE LOANS.—The loans eligible for repay-  
14          ment under this section are each of the following:

15                 “(1) Any loan for education in mental health or  
16                 a related field leading to a master’s degree, leading  
17                 to a doctoral degree, or consisting of post-doctoral  
18                 study.

19                 “(2) Any Federal Direct Stafford Loan, Fed-  
20                 eral Direct PLUS Loan, or Federal Direct Unsub-  
21                 sidized Stafford Loan, or Federal Direct Consolida-  
22                 tion Loan (as such terms are used in section 455 of  
23                 the Higher Education Act of 1965).

24                 “(3) Any Federal Perkins Loan under part E  
25                 of title I of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

1           “(4) Any other Federal loan as determined ap-  
2           propriate by the Secretary.

3           “(d) PERIOD OF SERVICE.—The period of service re-  
4           quired by an agreement under subsection (a) shall consist  
5           of up to 6 years of full-time employment, with no more  
6           than one year passing between any two years of covered  
7           employment, as a mental health professional in the United  
8           States in a mental health professional shortage area.

9           “(e) INELIGIBILITY FOR DOUBLE BENEFITS.—No  
10          borrower may, for the same service, receive a reduction  
11          of loan obligations or a loan repayment under both—

12                 “(1) this subsection; and

13                 “(2) any Federally supported loan forgiveness  
14          program, including under section 338B, 338I, or  
15          846 of this Act, or section 428J, 428L, 455(m), or  
16          460 of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

17          “(f) BREACH.—

18                 “(1) LIQUIDATED DAMAGES FORMULA.—The  
19          Secretary may establish a liquidated damages for-  
20          mula to be used in the event of a breach of an  
21          agreement entered into under subsection (a).

22                 “(2) LIMITATION.—The failure by an individual  
23          to complete the full period of service obligated pur-  
24          suant to such an agreement, taken alone, shall not  
25          constitute a breach of the agreement, so long as the

1 individual completed in good faith the years of serv-  
2 ice for which payments were made to the individual  
3 under this section.

4 “(g) ADDITIONAL CRITERIA.—The Secretary—

5 “(1) may establish such criteria and rules to  
6 carry out this section as the Secretary determines  
7 are needed and in addition to the criteria and rules  
8 specified in this section; and

9 “(2) shall give notice to the committees speci-  
10 fied in subsection (h) of any criteria and rules so es-  
11 tablished.

12 “(h) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 5 years  
13 after the date of enactment of the Mental Health Profes-  
14 sionals Workforce Shortage Loan Repayment Act, and  
15 every other year thereafter, the Secretary shall prepare  
16 and submit to the Committee on Energy and Commerce  
17 of the House of Representatives and the Committee on  
18 Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate a  
19 report on—

20 “(1) the number and location of borrowers who  
21 have qualified for loan repayments under this sec-  
22 tion; and

23 “(2) the impact of this section on the avail-  
24 ability of mental health services in mental health  
25 professional shortage areas.

1 “(i) DEFINITION.—In this section:

2 “(1) The term ‘mental health professional’  
3 means a full-time job (including a fellowship) where  
4 the primary intent and function of the job is the di-  
5 rect treatment or recovery support of patients with  
6 or in recovery from a mental health disorder, such  
7 as a physician (MD or DO), psychiatric nurse, social  
8 worker, mental health counselor, psychologist, psy-  
9 chiatrist, child and adolescent psychiatrist, or neu-  
10 rologist.

11 “(2) The term ‘mental health professional  
12 shortage area’ means—

13 “(A) an area designated under section 332  
14 with respect to a shortage of mental health pro-  
15 fessionals; or

16 “(B) any facility, program, center, or clinic  
17 as determined appropriate by the Secretary for  
18 purposes of this section because of a shortage  
19 of mental health professionals, including private  
20 physician practices and other medical facilities  
21 designated under section 332(a) as having such  
22 a shortage.

23 “(j) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
24 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section  
25 \$25,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2019 through 2028.”.