

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 944

To amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize a loan repayment program to encourage specialty medicine physicians to serve in rural communities experiencing a shortage of specialty medicine physicians, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 8, 2021

Mr. MCKINLEY (for himself and Mr. WELCH) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

A BILL

To amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize a loan repayment program to encourage specialty medicine physicians to serve in rural communities experiencing a shortage of specialty medicine physicians, 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. SPECIALTY WORKFORCE IN RURAL COMMU-**
4 **NITIES.**

5 Title VII of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.
6 292 et seq.) is amended—

1 (1) by redesignating part G (42 U.S.C. 795j et
2 seq.) as part H; and

3 (2) by inserting after part F (42 U.S.C. 295h)
4 the following new part:

5 **“PART G—SPECIALTY MEDICINE WORKFORCE IN**
6 **RURAL COMMUNITIES**

7 **“SEC. 782. LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM.**

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

11 “(1) the Secretary enters into agreements with
12 specialty medicine physicians to make payments in
13 accordance with subsection (b) on the principal of
14 and interest on any eligible loans described in sub-
15 section (c); and

16 “(2) the specialty medicine physicians each
17 agree to complete a period of obligated service de-
18 scribed in subsection (d) as a specialty medicine
19 physician in the United States in a rural community
20 experiencing a shortage of specialty medicine physi-
21 cians.

22 “(b) PAYMENTS.—For each year of obligated service
23 by a specialty medicine physician pursuant to an agree-
24 ment under subsection (a), the Secretary shall make a
25 payment to such physician as follows:

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

3 “(A) for each year of obligated service by
4 a specialty medicine physician pursuant to an
5 agreement under subsection (a), $\frac{1}{6}$ of the prin-
6 cipal of and interest on each eligible loan of the
7 physician which is outstanding on the date the
8 physician began service pursuant to the agree-
9 ment; and

10 “(B) for completion of the sixth and final
11 year of such service, the remainder of such
12 principal and interest.

13 “(2) MAXIMUM AMOUNT.—The total amount of
14 payments under this section to any specialty medi-
15 cine physician shall not exceed \$250,000.

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

18 “(1) Any loan for education in specialty medi-
19 cine.

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

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

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

5 “(d) PERIOD OF OBLIGATED SERVICE.—Any spe-
6 cialty medicine physician receiving payments under this
7 section as required by an agreement under subsection (a)
8 shall agree to a 6-year commitment to full-time employ-
9 ment, with no more than 1 year passing between any 2
10 years of covered employment, as a specialty medicine phy-
11 sician in the United States in a rural community experi-
12 encing a shortage of specialty medicine physicians.

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

16 “(1) this section; and

17 “(2) any Federally supported loan forgiveness
18 program, including under section 338B, 338I, or
19 846 of this Act, or section 428J, 428L, 455(m), or
20 460 of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

21 “(f) BREACH.—

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

1 “(2) LIMITATION.—The failure by a specialty
2 medicine physician to complete the full period of
3 service obligated pursuant to such an agreement,
4 taken alone, shall not constitute a breach of the
5 agreement, so long as the physician completed in
6 good faith the years of service for which payments
7 were made to the physician under this section.

8 “(g) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 5
9 years after the date of enactment of this section, and not
10 less than every other year thereafter through fiscal year
11 2030, the Secretary shall report to Congress on—

12 “(1) the practice location of physicians partici-
13 pating, or who have participated, in the loan repay-
14 ment program under this section; and

15 “(2) the impact of the loan repayment program
16 under this section on the availability of specialty
17 medicine services in the United States in rural com-
18 munities experiencing a shortage of specialty medi-
19 cine physicians.

20 “(h) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term specialty
21 medicine physician means a physician practicing in a spe-
22 cialty identified in the December 2008 report of the
23 Health Resources and Services Administration entitled
24 ‘The Physician Workforce: Projections and Research into
25 Current Issues Affecting Supply and Demand’ as a spe-

1 cialty whose baseline projected demand exceeds its pro-
2 jected supply for the period of 2005 through 2020.

3 “(i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—To
4 carry out this section, there are authorized to be appro-
5 priated such sums as may be necessary for fiscal years
6 2022 through 2031.”.

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