

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33

A BILL

25-55

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



To support an educational and career pathway for behavioral health and human services occupations in the District by establishing a scholarship program at the University of the District of Columbia for District residents, employees, and public school graduates who pursue certain master’s degree programs and licensure from the Board of Professional Counseling or the Board of Social Work.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this act may be cited as the “Pathways to Behavioral Health Degrees Act of 2023”.

Sec. 2. Definitions.

For the purposes of this subtitle, the term:

(1) “Accredited Master’s Degree” means an accredited master’s degree under the Middle States Commission on Higher Education in counseling, school counseling, clinical mental health counseling, social work or other masters’ degree programs accepted by the Board of Professional Counseling or the Board of Social Work for the purposes of licensure in a behavioral health and human services occupation.

(2) “Behavioral health and human services occupation” means an occupation that requires a worker to be licensed by the Board of Professional Counseling or the Board of Social Work.

34 (3) "DCPS" means the District of Columbia Public Schools.

35 (4) "Health care provider organization" means any entity licensed under federal,
36 state, or District law to provide health care services, including provider organizations certified by
37 the Department of Behavioral Health and including group practice provider organizations
38 enrolled in the District's Medicaid program.

39 (5) "LEA" means local education agency, which is DCPS or any individual or
40 group of public charter schools operating under a single charter.

41 (6) "Program" means the Behavioral Health and Human Services Scholarship
42 Program established pursuant to this act.

43 (7) "UDC" means the University of the District of Columbia.

44 Sec. 3. Program establishment.

45 (a)(1) There is established a Behavioral Health and Human Services Scholarship Program
46 at UDC to provide financial assistance to individuals who seek to obtain an accredited master's
47 degree from UDC and become licensed in a behavioral health or human services occupation to
48 work for a District government agency or for an LEA or health care provider organization
49 located in the District.

50 (b) Through UDC, the Program shall provide:

51 (1) Education to Program participants that may lead to:

52 (A) The successful completion of an accredited master's degree program at
53 UDC;

54 (B) Passage of licensure exams if required to become licensed in a
55 behavioral health and human services occupation; and

56 (C) Hiring by District LEAs, District government agencies, or health care
57 provider organizations located in the District in a behavioral health and human services
58 occupation; and

59 (2) Financial assistance to Program participants for payment of:

60 (A) Tuition at UDC, to the extent charged;

61 (B) Academic costs, including the cost of books and supplies;

62 (C) Stipends to be used toward living expenses and transportation; and

63 (D) Fees associated with obtaining a license for a behavioral health and
64 human services occupation in the District.

65 (c) UDC shall select individuals to participate in the Program, consistent with the
66 eligibility criteria established pursuant to section 4.

67 (d) Program marketing and public education shall be provided by UDC to attract District
68 residents and employees to the Program and for the duration of the Program.

69 (e) Among other authorized uses, UDC may use local funds appropriated to the Program
70 to provide:

71 (1) Salaries and fringe benefits for faculty and staff directly engaged in the
72 provision of courses necessary to obtain an accredited master's degree;

73 (2) Instructional materials used in courses necessary to obtain an accredited
74 master's degree;

75 (3) For marketing and recruitment activities to attract individuals to the Program;

76 and

77 (4) The financial assistance for Program participants described in subsection (b)
78 of this section.

79 Sec. 4. Program participant eligibility.

80 (a) To be eligible for financial assistance provided through the Program, an individual
81 shall:

82 (1) Meet the relevant requirements for the accredited master's degree program at
83 UDC in which the individual enrolls;

84 (2) Be:

85 (A) A resident of the District;

86 (B) A graduate of a District LEA; or

87 (C) Employed by a District government agency or health care provider
88 organization;

89 (3) Be enrolled in a UDC accredited master's degree program necessary to obtain
90 licensure in a behavioral health and human services occupation in the District;

91 (4) Have a stated interest in pursuing a license in a behavioral health and human
92 services occupation and to work in a behavioral health or human services occupation in the
93 District; and

94 (5) Meet other criteria specified by UDC.

95 (b) To maintain eligibility for financial assistance through the Program, an individual
96 shall:

97 (1) Maintain satisfactory academic progress, as determined by UDC;

98 (2) Be consecutively enrolled as a full-time or part-time student in an accredited
99 master's degree program at UDC; and

100 (3) Meet any other requirement determined by UDC to be necessary or
101 appropriate for Program participation.

102 (c) In exchange for accepting Program financial assistance, a Program participant shall
103 commit to working for a District government agency or an LEA or health care provider
104 organization located in the District for a minimum of 2 years after receiving an accredited
105 master's degree and earning the appropriate licensure or certification needed to practice in a
106 behavioral health and human services occupation in the District.

107 Sec. 5. Fiscal impact statement.

108 The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal
109 impact statement required by 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975, approved
110 October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

111 Sec. 6. Effective date.

112 This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the
113 Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of Congressional review as
114 provided in sections 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December
115 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code § 1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of
116 Columbia Register.