

AN ACT

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IN THE COUNCIL OF DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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To support a 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 who pursue certain master’s degree programs and then 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 act, 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 master’s degree programs accepted by the Board of Professional Counseling or 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 District’s Board of Professional Counseling or Board of Social Work.

(3) “Health care provider organization” means an entity that is licensed under federal, state, or District law to provide health care services and provides those services in the District. The term includes provider organizations certified by the Department of Behavioral Health, including group practice provider organizations enrolled in the District’s Medicaid program.

(4) “LEA” means local education agency, which is the District of Columbia Public Schools system or any individual or group of public charter schools operating under a single charter.

(5) “Program” means the Behavioral Health and Suman Services Program established by section 3.

(6) “UDC” means the University of the District of Columbia.

**Sec. 3. Program establishment.**

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

(b) The Program shall provide financial assistance to UDC students for:

(1) The successful completion of an accredited master's degree program at UDC;  
and

(2) Passage of licensure exams to become licensed in a behavioral health and human services occupation.

(c) The financial assistance to Program participants shall include some or all of the following:

(1) Tuition at UDC, to the extent charged;  
(2) Academic costs, including the cost of books and supplies;  
(3) Stipends to be used toward living expenses and transportation; and  
(4) Fees associated with obtaining a license for a behavioral health and human services occupation in the District.

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

(e) Program marketing and public education shall be provided by UDC to attract District residents and employees to the Program.

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

(1) Salaries and fringe benefits for faculty and staff directly engaged in providing courses necessary to obtain an accredited master's degree;  
(2) Instructional materials used in courses necessary to obtain an accredited master's degree; and  
(3) Marketing and recruitment activities to attract individuals to the Program.

**Sec. 4. Program participant eligibility.**

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

(1) Meet the relevant enrollment requirements for the accredited master's degree program at UDC in which the individual enrolls;  
(2) Be a resident of the District;  
(3) Be enrolled in a UDC accredited master's degree program necessary to obtain licensure in a behavioral health and human services occupation in the District;

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

(5) Meet other criteria as specified by UDC.

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

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

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

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

(c)(1) In exchange for accepting Program financial assistance, a Program participant shall commit to working for a District government agency, an LEA in the District, or a health care provider organization operating in the District for 3 years after receiving an accredited master's degree and earning the appropriate licensure or certification needed to practice in a behavioral health and human services occupation in the District.

(2) If an individual successfully passes the licensure exam for a degree program authorized for licensure by the Board of Professional Counseling or Board of Social Work but does not complete 3 years working for a District government agency, an LEA in the District, or a health care provider organization operating in the District, the individual shall be obligated to return all financial assistance provided to the individual under the Program, regardless of any partial completion of the 3-year minimum; except, that in extraordinary circumstances beyond the individual's control, UDC may waive or pro-rate the obligation to return all of the financial assistance.

(3) UDC may impose additional requirements which, if not met by a Program participant, require the individual to return some or all of the financial assistance.

**Sec. 5. Fiscal impact statement.**

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

**Sec. 6. Effective date.**

This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as provided in sections 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December

**ENROLLED ORIGINAL**

24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code § 1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of Columbia Register.

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Chairman  
Council of the District of Columbia

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Mayor  
District of Columbia