

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to the Dental Student Loan Repayment
3 Program; creating s. 381.4019, F.S.; establishing the
4 Dental Student Loan Repayment Program to support
5 dentists who practice in public health programs
6 located in certain underserved areas; providing
7 definitions; requiring the Department of Health to
8 establish the loan program; providing for the award of
9 funds; providing the maximum number of years funds may
10 be awarded; providing eligibility requirements;
11 requiring the department to adopt rules; providing an
12 effective date.

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14 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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16 Section 1. Section 381.4019, Florida Statutes, is created
17 to read:

18 381.4019 Dental Student Loan Repayment Program.—Subject to
19 the availability of funds, the Legislature establishes the
20 Dental Student Loan Repayment Program to promote access to
21 dental care by supporting qualified dentists who treat medically
22 underserved populations in dental health professional shortage
23 areas or medically underserved areas. The Legislature recognizes
24 that maintaining good oral health is integral to overall health
25 status and that the good health of residents in this state is an

26 important contributing factor in state economic development.
27 Better health, including better oral health, increases workplace
28 productivity, reduces the burden of health care costs, and
29 improves the cognitive development of children.

30 (1) As used in this section, the term:

31 (a) "Dental health professional shortage area" means a
32 geographic area designated as such by the Health Resources and
33 Services Administration of the United States Department of
34 Health and Human Services.

35 (b) "Department" means the Department of Health.

36 (c) "Loan program" means the Dental Student Loan Repayment
37 Program.

38 (d) "Medically underserved area" means a geographic area,
39 an area having a special population, or a facility which is
40 designated by department rule as a health professional shortage
41 area as defined by federal regulation and which has a shortage
42 of dental health professionals who serve Medicaid recipients and
43 other low-income patients.

44 (e) "Public health program" means a county health
45 department, the Children's Medical Services program, a federally
46 funded community health center, a federally funded migrant
47 health center, or other publicly funded or nonprofit health care
48 program designated by the department.

49 (2) The department shall establish a dental student loan
50 repayment program to benefit Florida-licensed dentists who

51 demonstrate, as required by department rule, active employment
52 in a public health program that serves Medicaid recipients and
53 other low-income patients and is located in a dental health
54 professional shortage area or a medically underserved area.

55 (3) The department shall award funds from the loan program
56 to repay the student loans of a dentist who meets the
57 requirements of subsection (2).

58 (a) An award may not exceed \$50,000 per year per eligible
59 dentist.

60 (b) Only loans to pay the costs of tuition, books, dental
61 equipment and supplies, uniforms, and living expenses shall be
62 covered.

63 (c) All repayments shall be contingent upon continued
64 proof of eligibility and shall be made directly to the holder of
65 the loan. The state shall bear no responsibility for the
66 collection of any interest charges or other remaining balances.

67 (d) A dentist is eligible to receive funds under the loan
68 program for at least 1 year, up to a maximum of 5 years.

69 (e) The department shall limit the number of new dentists
70 participating in the loan program to no more than 10 per fiscal
71 year.

72 (4) A dentist is no longer eligible to receive funds under
73 the loan program if the dentist:

74 (a) Is no longer employed by a public health program that
75 meets the requirements of subsection (2).

76 (b) Ceases to participate in the Florida Medicaid program.

77 (c) Has disciplinary action taken against his or her
78 license by the Board of Dentistry for a violation of s. 466.028.

79 (5) The department shall adopt rules to administer the
80 loan program.

81 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2018.