

House Bill 872

By: Representatives Hawkins of the 27th, Parrish of the 158th, Bennett of the 94th, Cooper of the 45th, and Silcox of the 53rd

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 34 of Title 31 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
2 medical professionals for rural assistance, so as to expand the service cancelable loan
3 program for physicians and other health care providers in underserved areas to include dental
4 students; to provide for criteria; to provide for length of loans; to provide for related matters;
5 to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

7 **SECTION 1.**

8 Chapter 34 of Title 31 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to medical
9 professionals for rural assistance, is amended by revising Code Section 31-34-2, relating to
10 the purpose and intent of the article, as follows:

11 "31-34-2.

12 It is the purpose of this article to increase the number of physicians, dentists, physician
13 assistants, and advanced practice registered nurses in underserved rural areas of Georgia
14 by making loans to physicians, dentists, physician assistants, and advanced practice
15 registered nurses who have completed their medical or health care education and to dental
16 students and allowing such loans to be repaid by such physicians, dentists, physician

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17 assistants, ~~and~~ advanced practice registered nurses, and dental students agreeing to practice
18 medicine or provide health care services in such rural areas and by making grants to
19 hospitals and, as determined by the Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce, other health
20 care entities, local governments, and civic organizations in underserved rural areas of
21 Georgia that agree to provide matching funds to the grant, with the intent to enhance
22 recruitment efforts in bringing physicians, dentists, physician assistants, and advanced
23 practice registered nurses to such areas. It is the intent of the General Assembly that if
24 funds are available to the Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce to make loans, grants,
25 or scholarships under this article or under other applicable state law, the Georgia Board of
26 Health Care Workforce shall give priority to loans and scholarships under Part 6 of Article
27 7 of Chapter 3 of Title 20 and to loans under Code Section 31-34-4."

28

SECTION 2.

29 Said chapter is further amended by revising Code Section 31-34-4, relating to loan applicant
30 qualifications and rules and regulations, as follows:

31 "31-34-4.

32 (a)(1) A physician, dentist, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse
33 who receives a loan under the program provided for in this article shall be a citizen or
34 national of the United States licensed to practice his or her health care profession within
35 the State of Georgia at the time the loan is made, and shall be a graduate of an accredited
36 graduate medical education program or other applicable accredited health care education
37 program located in the United States which has received accreditation or provisional
38 accreditation by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education or the
39 American Osteopathic Association or such other applicable accreditation for other health
40 care education programs, as determined by the board.

41 (2) A dental student who receives a loan under the program provided for in this article
42 shall be a citizen or national of the United States and shall be actively enrolled as a

43 fourth-year student in an accredited dental education program located in the United
44 States.

45 (b) The board shall make a full investigation of the qualifications of an applicant for a loan
46 under the provisions of this article to determine the applicant's fitness for participation in
47 such loan program, and for such purposes, the board may propound such examinations to
48 applicants as the board deems proper. The board's investigation shall include a
49 determination of the outstanding medical or health care education loans incurred by the
50 applicant while completing his or her medical or health care education and training.

51 (c)(1) The board is authorized to consider among other criteria for granting loans under
52 the provisions of this article the state residency status and home area of the applying
53 physician, dentist, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse and to give
54 priority to those applicants who are physicians, dentists, physician assistants, and
55 advanced practice registered nurses actively practicing or beginning active practice in
56 specialties experiencing shortages or distribution problems in rural areas of this state as
57 determined by the board pursuant to rules and regulations adopted by it in accordance
58 with this article.

59 (2) For dental students, the board is authorized to consider among other criteria for
60 granting loans under the provisions of this article the state residency status and home area
61 of the applying dental student and to give priority to those applicants who are dental
62 students desiring to actively practice in specialties experiencing shortages or distribution
63 problems in counties in this state with a population of 100,000 or less according to the
64 United States decennial census of 2020 or any future census state in accordance with
65 rules and regulations adopted by the board pursuant to this article.

66 (d) The board may adopt and prescribe such rules and regulations as it deems necessary
67 or appropriate to administer and carry out the loan program provided for in this article.
68 Such rules and regulations shall provide for fixing the rate of regular interest to accrue on
69 loans granted under the provisions of this article. Such regular rate of interest shall not

70 exceed by more than 2 percent the prime rate published from time to time by the Board of
71 Governors of the Federal Reserve System. Within such limitation, the regular rate of
72 interest may be increased for new recipients of loans under this article."

73 **SECTION 3.**

74 Said chapter is further amended by revising subsection (a) of Code Section 31-34-5, relating
75 to service cancelable loans, amounts, repayments, and determination of underserved rural
76 areas, as follows:

77 "(a)(1) The board shall have the authority to grant to each applicant approved by the
78 board on a one-year renewable basis a service cancelable loan for a period not exceeding
79 four years; provided, however, that for applicants that are dental students, service
80 cancelable loans shall be for a period of four years. The amount of the loan shall be
81 determined by the board, but such amount shall be related to the applicant's outstanding
82 obligations incurred as a direct result of completing medical or health care education and
83 training.

84 (2) A loan or loans to each approved applicant shall be granted on the condition that the
85 full amount of the loan or loans shall be repaid to the State of Georgia in services to be
86 rendered by the applicant's practicing his or her profession in a board approved physician,
87 dentist, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse underserved rural area
88 of Georgia. For each full year of practicing his or her profession in such underserved
89 rural area, the physician, dentist, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered
90 nurse who obtained the loan shall receive credit for the full amount of one year's loan plus
91 regular interest which accrued on such amount."

92 **SECTION 4.**

93 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.